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Someday

From ballooning in exotic locales to finding true love to retiring by the beach, National Geographic's January/February **Your Shot** photo assignment, *Someday*, inspired creativity and helped this photography community focus on aspirations. **The Your Shot editors reviewed more than 12,000 submissions and created a story from the finalists, which you can see at ngm.com/yourshot.** Here are some of their top picks.

Home Sweet Home by Teran Jones, United States

This image looks as if it was hand-tinted with its perfectly placed color swaths of blue and yellow-muted pastels shining bright in the sunshine. The well-worn trailer adds to the vintage quality of this photo. I can hear the highway calling ... the open road lies ahead.



On the Road by Donna Tzaneva, Bulgaria

The woman's eyeglasses mirror the panes of glass in the train window. Both offer a view into other worlds—the lush tropical landscape or the daydreams of a Thai woman. Showing her with closed eyes helps the viewer feel as if they are watching an intimate moment ... maybe she is dreaming about her someday.



Passing Flight by Joe Almond, France

Each person tells a different story in this photo. What can you decipher from their posture and clothing? I like the horizontal layers: the legs, the chairs, the people, the band of empty blue sky that gives your eye a rest. And then finally a single airplane comes into view, the last piece of the puzzle.



BECAUSE SOMEDAY

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GUESTS.



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THROUGH THE LENS

Capturing Urban Light

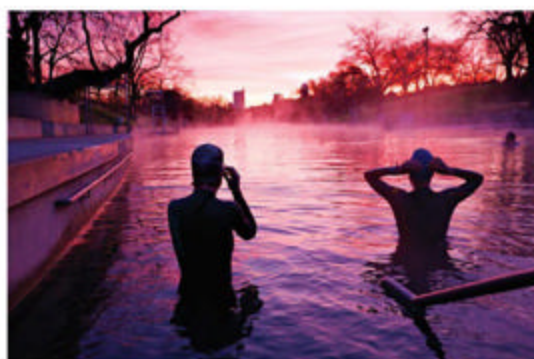
Dan Westergren, *National Geographic Traveler's* Director of Photography, guides the magazine's photographic vision and shares his insights on getting the best shot.



"Mastering the use of light is crucial to taking better pictures. And in any urban landscape, using the transition times of early and late sunlight will make the color and drama of your images all the more intense. To capture classic Austin, Texas architecture, I headed for the iconic Driskill Hotel. I found the most interesting angle and light from the top of a parking garage and just after sunset. That let me catch the magic moment when light from the sky, hotel, and street all match to produce evenly illuminated color and a warm nighttime glow.

To take advantage of early sunlight, I went to Austin's Barton Springs Pool, knowing the cold morning air would create rising mist. For five incredible minutes, light and color wove together as the sun painted the sky pink, reflected off the water, and allowed me to add drama by rendering the women in silhouette."

Capturing light depends on the right camera lens, too. In Austin, Dan shot with a wide-angle zoom lens. He also wears his prescription Transitions® adaptive lenses on assignment because they seamlessly adapt to changing conditions. Whether shooting in low light, bright light, or anything in between, he sees the world the way it's meant to be seen.



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THE FOUR WORLDS OF ECUADOR

Within one country, you'll find four diverse worlds awaiting your discovery. Nowhere but Ecuador packs such amazing variety into one spectacular space.

★ FOREVER GALÁPAGOS

Deservedly at the top of many a life list, the Galápagos Islands are chock-full of animal species, many found nowhere else on the planet. Amid a huge marine reserve, you can not only spot, but also swim with penguins, sea lions, sea turtles, sharks, and possibly whales. Although renowned as a scuba diving site, the Galápagos are equally amazing with a simple mask and snorkel.

Embark on a live-aboard cruise and travel to the remote islands of this magical archipelago. Unforgettable volcanic landscapes and landing sites provide up close encounters with its famed species such as the ink black marine iguana and the comical blue-footed boobies. Every day is a new day of discovery here in "nature's laboratory."

You can also make one of the hotels on the few inhabited islands your home base for exploring all the different islands or nearby attractions. Adventures range from hiking up to the rim of an active volcano, birdwatching amid giant daisy trees, biking along trails, or sea kayaking off pristine coastline.

After a day's exploration, enjoy the islands' cuisine, which offers such specialties as local lobster, ceviche with onion and lemon, and *viche* (fish soup served with green bananas). For breakfast, lunch, or a snack, try *bolones* (fried plantain dumplings).





SPLENDID PACIFIC COAST

You could easily spend several days on Ecuador's stunning Pacific coast. There are beaches to relax on, waves to surf, historic towns to visit, and warm locals to welcome you, plus savory cuisine that varies from one province to the next. First-class roads, part of the Spondylus Route, run parallel along the entire coast, from Esmeraldas in the north to Salinas in the south. Beautiful beaches dot the way, including Mompiche, Cojimies, Canoa, Crucita, Puerto Cayo, Puerto López, Machalilla, Olón, and Montañita.

Farther south, the vast River Guayas creates a fascinating gulf, wild, green, and lined with mangroves. Inland rises the dynamic city of Guayaquil. This commercial and financial center of the country, famous for its lively boardwalks, seafood restaurants, and nightlife, is fun by day and night.

ECUADORIAN ANDES

The volcanic peaks of this high region give rise to both icy streams and hot springs, just right for mountain spas. Fields of grain and potatoes make patchwork patterns across an ancient land that harbors a rich indigenous history. In the capital of Quito, take a cable car high above the city or walk among the many architectural treasures of its historic center—it was the first city to be named a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

A scenic and leisurely way to travel to and from the region, the Cruise Train whistles and steams its way between the Andes and the Pacific, passing through market towns, villages, cloud forests, and other fascinating landscapes. It winds its way through the Avenue of the Volcanoes, where elevations vary from 5,000 to more than 16,000 feet. Overnight in a small village or in a hacienda, a former colonial estate.

In the southern Andes, stroll the narrow, cobbled streets, and duck into a restaurant for tamales and a regional favorite, *hornado* (slow-roasted pork), in the provincial town of Cuenca. Check out the fine wares of craftsmen who turn gold, silver, and leather into works of art.

AMAZON HEARTBEAT

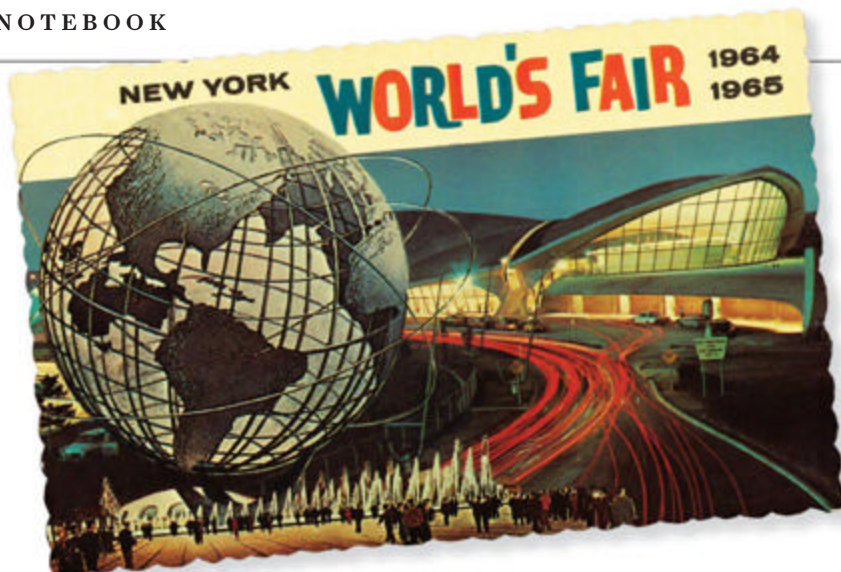
In the eastern part of the country, the Amazon's tropical forests and crystalline rivers protect a mind-boggling array of unique flora and fauna. A visit here will open your eyes and heart to the great number of species we share our planet with.

By traveling downriver along the Amazon's tributaries, you enter a thick verdant world, quiet and mysterious, broken only by the chatter of monkeys and the screech of parrots. You see flashes of bright color amid infinite shades of green. Yasuní National Park preserves a large area that is home to the Waorani and other peoples who choose to continue living isolated from the modern world.

Spend a night or two in an eco-lodge or aboard a river cruise to get as close to nature as you can. Part of the experience is to try the fresh local cuisine, such as river fish cooked inside palm leaves and served with cassava and hot sauce.

 **Start your Ecuador journey at ecuador.travel.**





EDITOR'S DESK

What the World Needs Now

The 1964-1965 New York World's Fair opened in the midst of the atomic age, the space race, the Cold War, and growing civil rights unrest. A 12-story stainless steel model of Earth called the "Unisphere" symbolized its theme of peace. Walt Disney showed off his new audio-animatronic technology with a ride called "It's a Small World," dedicated to the children of the planet. Many countries set up pavilions or exhibits (the Vatican, incredibly, shipped Michelangelo's priceless "Pieta"—the original, mind you—to Queens!). American companies flexed their muscle and showed off their wares (color TV, jet packs).

The fair attracted 51.6 million visitors, including the Beatles, Marian Anderson, Liberace, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and Pope Paul VI. As well as my parents, just arrived from the Philippines, part of a new

wave of immigrants eager to contribute to and partake in the American dream. Dad, an engineer, checked out the new Ford Mustang. Mom, a doctor, and pregnant with me, rested in the shade of the Philip Johnson-designed Tent of Tomorrow and took in the panoply.

Postcard from Flushing Meadows, Queens

Every few years, an imperfect but striving world comes together in pride of human progress, invention, and culture. What did past World's Fairs showcase? Icons such as the Eiffel Tower and the Seattle Space Needle. Inventions such as air conditioning and Smell-O-Vision. Fun foods such as cotton candy and hot dogs. Postcards and travel posters. An evolving appreciation of world cultures. And perhaps most important, a hopeful vision for the future of mankind. It is a small world, after all. Our story on page 49 celebrates these periodic gatherings. Attend one yourself: The Milan Expo opens this month. —*Norie Quintos*



CHECK IT OUT

NAT GEO'S BIOBLITZ

Nature's calling from Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. During May 15-16, scientists, teachers, community guides, and the public will participate in Nat Geo's annual BioBlitz—a free event that sets out to inventory the site's living creatures and plants.

▶ [HEAD TO NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM/BIOBLITZ](http://HEAD.TONATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM/BIOBLITZ) TO REGISTER.

WHAT I KNOW



JANE GOODALL

CONSERVATIONIST
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S
EXPLORER-IN-RESIDENCE EMERITUS

Birthday Wishes

Turning 80 last year only strengthened my resolve to do as much as I can in whatever time I have remaining to protect animals and inspire a new generation of conservation activists. I started Roots and Shoots in Tanzania in 1991. Today we have 150,000 youth groups in 138 countries supporting wildlife sanctuaries and community development. But my work is not yet finished.

Perks of Tourism

Many wildlife species such as chimps and gorillas would not survive without tourism. I know how people have been utterly changed by looking into the eyes of a wild chimpanzee. They are never the same again. The message is not to stop tourism, but to make sure we get it right. In essence, tourism is good, provided the benefits accrue to the local people so they become partners in saving nature.

Local Makers

People say think globally, act locally. Well, if you think globally, it is overwhelming and you do not have enough energy left to act locally. Just act locally and see what a difference you can make. We are constantly told to buy more, buy, buy, buy! But do we really need it? It starts with trying to live a more sustainable life in the small decisions we make every day.

▶ [READ MORE ON NGM.NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM/GOMBE-HUB](http://READ.MORE.ON.NGM.NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM/GOMBE-HUB)

TALK TO US

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eye to eye

Durban

SOUTH AFRICA



“ The greatness of a nation,
and its moral progress can be
judged by the way its animals are treated. ”

Mahatma Gandhi (Durban resident 1893 – 1914)

Durban; a city which has shepherded South Africa's conservation efforts for over 100 years,
establishing world renowned wildlife parks and natural world heritage sites on its doorstep.

BEST OF THE WEB

Miami for Free

Tropical Miami Beach celebrates its centennial this year. We've plucked three of our favorite things to do in this glitzy city that don't cost a dime.



The Museum of Fashion in Miami's Wynwood District

Art Walk

Feed off the energy of Miami's up-and-coming artists on the second Saturday of each month, when galleries stay open until 10 p.m. in the Wynwood Art District, home to edgy, experimental pieces.

Cuban Culture

Little Havana, located along S.W. Eighth Street, honors the city's Cuban heritage. Explore the handful of monuments, such as the Calle Ocho Walk of Fame, the Hispanic equivalent of Hollywood's starry sidewalk.

Play Stations

The family-oriented stretch of Miami Beach from 53rd to 63rd Street offers a playground and piles of sand for building castles, setting out picnics, and searching for buried treasure.

GO TO NATGEO.COM/TRAVEL FOR MORE FREE CITY GUIDES.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

HOMeward BOUND

Andrew McCarthy's "A Song for Ireland" (February/March 2015) inspired reader John Wallace of Shoreline, Washington, to discover his own Irish roots. "My paternal grandfather, Robert Wallace, was born there in the late 1800s and emigrated to Canada at the age of two," says Wallace. "I have often thought of going there, and if I'm actually going to do it, I'd better hasten, being 83."



Andrew McCarthy in Ireland



GEOGRAPHY BEE

Test Your Knowledge

Are you smarter than a National Geographic Bee contestant? Probably not. But you can still tune in on May 15 to watch the young global geniuses compete from our D.C. headquarters. Prepare with this pop quiz.

1

What seaport city is found at the head of Cook Inlet near the Kenai Peninsula?

2

Kirundi and French are official languages in what country south of Rwanda?

3

Name the desert that covers much of the area between Beijing and Ulaanbaatar.

4

Which South Asian capital, located on the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta, is the industrial center of Bangladesh?

5

Traditional haymaking cultures survive in the Transylvania Plateau, a region located in which country?

ANSWERS 1. ANCHORAGE 2. BURUNDI 3. GOBI 4. DHAKA 5. ROMANIA

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-  **Share it:** Upload your best images to Instagram from **April 1 - May 31, 2015** with **#MyAWAYContest** and a caption that tells how you found it.
-  **Win it:** The winner will be announced in late June on nationalgeographic.com/myaway.



You could win an amazing camera package that includes a Sony DSC-RX10 camera, plus accessories from National Geographic and Go RVing, to capture your next adventure.

For official rules and to view contest entries, go to nationalgeographic.com/myaway.

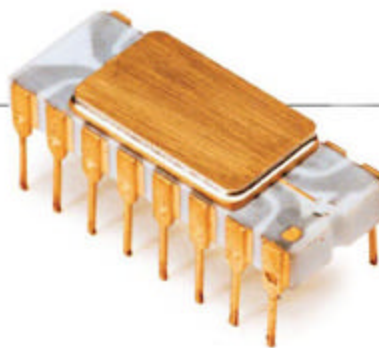
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NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. A PURCHASE WILL NOT INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING. Open to legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia 18 or older. Employees of National Geographic Society, Go RVing, and related parties are ineligible. Method of entry: Upload an original photograph from a trip to your special place in the United States to your Instagram account, using the hashtag “#MyAWAYContest” in the caption. Entries must be received by 11:59 p.m. EDT May 31, 2015. Unlimited entries allowed per person. Odds of winning depend on number of entries received and skill of entrant. Review full Official Rules at www.nationalgeographic.com/myaway after April 1, 2015. VOID WHERE PROHIBITED. Sponsor is National Geographic Society, 1145 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-4688.

READER TIP

We suggested a visit to Apple's headquarters in our "Silicon Valley for Dummies" roundup (February/March 2015), but reader Leslie Pfeiler thought we missed a spot in the tech hub. The Intel Museum, located at the company's home base in Santa Clara, California, offers interactive experiences such as spelling with binary code and donning white jumpsuits like those worn in Intel's manufacturing rooms.



Intel's first microprocessor (1971) was the size of a fingernail.



Millennials discuss passion projects on a cross-country train.

AMERICA BY RAIL

Train of Thought

This month, 20-somethings embark on a crowd-funded cross-country train journey in the name of innovation and creative problem-solving. "The Millennial Trains Project explores opportunity across America by helping emerging leaders develop projects that benefit and inspire others," says Patrick Dowd, MTP founder and *Traveler* editor at large. On the train, and in cities, participants attend lectures, brainstorm, and meet with local leaders. This year's trip heads from Los Angeles to D.C., stopping in San Antonio, Austin, New Orleans, and Atlanta along the way. —Kevin Kunitake

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Uluru in Australia

TRAVEL WITH US

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Are you inspired by our tours on pg. 56 but craving a more personalized experience? National Geographic Expeditions now offers Private Expeditions, which allows travelers to tour with only their

family and friends. Choose from 13 itineraries all across the globe, and invite a few of your favorite companions along for the adventure, whether it's in the Costa Rican jungle, the Greek ruins, or the Australian outback.

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It's time.

MONTANA

*The West Thumb Geyser Basin near West Yellowstone,
Gateway to Yellowstone National Park | VISITMT.COM*

What are you waiting for?

There are choices to make in planning a trip to Montana. From outdoor recreation to wildlife viewing, a legendary bucking horse sale to historic re-enactments, there are things to see and do here that you just can't experience elsewhere. Visitors often focus on Yellowstone or Glacier National Parks. While these destinations should be on every visitor's list, embracing the journey while traveling to the parks offers a richer appreciation for Montana. Because no matter which direction you enter this vast state, visitors curious enough to slow down and explore Montana's distinct regions will be repaid with countless adventures.



Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area in Southeast Montana

Explore the Past

If you're entering Montana from the Southeast, you're in for a treat. **Southeast Montana** is one of the state's best-kept secrets. Here you can delve into prehistoric history, the Lewis and Clark expedition, and Native American culture through monuments, museums, state parks and recreation areas. Dig deeper by attending the annual Crow Fair and Rodeo, held since 1904 and one of the largest modern-day Native American celebrations in the country.

Billings, Montana's largest city, offers excellent airline service from major hubs and is a great home base for many of these destinations. From here, you are within close range of the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument—site of Custer's Last Stand—and Pompeys Pillar National Monument, where the Lewis and Clark

Expedition camped and literally left their mark. Recreationalists can experience many adventures in Billings, including scenic hiking right in town along the sandstone Rimrocks. Award-winning restaurants and Montana's only walkable brewery district add to Billings' urban charm.

Travel north, or enter the state from the Northeast, where you'll discover how quiet sounds in **Missouri River Country**. The Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge's 1.1 million acres feature native prairies, forested coulees and badlands, and also encompass the Fort Peck Reservoir, a popular angling destination. The town of Fort Peck, situated alongside this impressive body of water, offers legendary entertainment at the Fort Peck Theatre.

TRAILHEAD TO ADVENTURE
Western hospitality on the edge of the genuine frontier

Southeast Montana
SoutheastMontana.com

Billings, MT
VisitBillings.com/natgeo

Missouri River Country
MissouriRiver.VisitMT.com



Yellowstone River near Billings, MT



Elk in Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri River Country



Annual Crow Fair and Rodeo



Continental Divide Trail near Butte, MT



Gates of the Mountains outside Helena, MT



Painter, Charles M. Russell



Missouri River Breaks in Central Montana

History Meets Adventure

Butte, in Southwest Montana, is another worthy jump-off for your journey. This historic mining town—one of the largest western cities at the turn of the 20th century—merits a visit. And while the historic underground tours should be on every traveler's list, a spectacular selection of hiking and biking trails surround town as part of the Continental Divide Trail System and the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route. If you've come to Montana to experience pristine water, the nearby Big Hole, Madison and Ruby rivers provide Blue Ribbon trout fishing.

Head north to **Helena** where water and history intersect in the Gates of the Mountains boat tours, which follow Lewis and Clark's explorations on the scenic Missouri River. Helena has a capital city vibe, meaning there's no shortage of hip eateries downtown. If you're looking to burn off some calories after a meal, the Mount Helena City Park connects adventurers to over 75 miles of trails.

Venture north and you're firmly in **Central Montana**. The Missouri River continues through this area and is the heart of the city of **Great Falls**. Check out The River's Edge Trail, where 57 miles of trails run along both sides of the Missouri. Make time to visit the C.M Russell Museum, which tells the story of renowned artist Charlie Russell, known for painting the old West as it really was.

If you continue north, chances are Glacier National Park is an anticipated destination. But speeding by the Rocky Mountain Front—a dramatic landscape where plains meet the Rockies—and the small towns along the way would be a mistake. Experience the beauty and culture of the area by staying at a family-owned dude ranch. There are also multiple entrance points along this route to the Bob Marshall Wilderness, one of the largest wilderness areas in the lower 48.

CAN'T-MISS PLACES
Get ready to rewrite your bucket list with these must-see spots

Butte, MT
ButteCVB.com

Helena, MT
HelenaMT.com

Central Montana
CentralMontana.com

Great Falls, MT
GenuineMontana.com



Flathead Lake in Western Montana's Glacier Country



Whitefish, MT



Could It Get Any Better?

Once you reach Glacier National Park, you might be skeptical that any place could be more breathtaking than what you've seen in your travels thus far, but Glacier delivers. One of the largest intact ecosystems in the continental U.S., Glacier is home to 70 species of mammals, including bears and mountain goats. Guided hikes, scenic boat rides, bus tours and Blackfeet interpretive tours enable visitors to learn more than meets the eye.

Just west, the cozy ski town of **Whitefish** is where spectacular nature meets vibrant community. While the Whitefish Trail system offers countless ways to tire yourself, the area's award-winning restaurants ensure that no visitor leaves hungry, and the walkable downtown offers an array of local shops, galleries and nightlife options.

As further proof that **Western Montana's Glacier Country's** wonders extend beyond park boundaries, Flathead Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake in the West, provides a variety of recreation opportunities. This northwest corner of the state is also home to 21 state parks and pristine rivers, reminding visitors once again that the journey throughout Montana really is the adventure.

Your Basecamp for Adventure

Town Pump Hotel Group prides itself on the philosophy of serving and reinvesting in the local community and has grown to include a wide range of stops adventurers need. The Town Pump Hotel Group consists of seven trusted brands in the midst of adventure hotspots that make ideal basecamps.

BEYOND THE PARK

Start in Whitefish and explore the waters of Western Montana's Glacier Country

Whitefish Montana
ExploreWhitefish.com

Western MT's Glacier Country
GlacierMT.com/NG

GAS MONEY

Stay at one of these locations and receive a **\$25 gas card** for your Montana road trip. Find out how at townpumphotels.com



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 Group locations**

NAVIGATING THE GLOBE

SMART TRAVELER

UNESCO
recognizes
falconry in
Mongolia as
a cultural
tradition worth
protecting.
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Turkey

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#HomeOf

 Nevşehir, Turkey

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TURKISH AIRLINES 



CHECKING IN

Homegrown Harmony in British Columbia

Vancouver's new **Skwachàys Lodge** gives the city's indigenous cultures a boost—starting with the 40-foot totem pole that rises from the roof. First Nations artists and local designers teamed up to create native art for each of the 18 rooms, a fair-trade art gallery on the main floor, and sweat lodge ceremonies on its patio. All profits provide affordable housing for the city's urban aborigines. —JEANNETTE KIMMEL

Preserving traditions, from hat weaving in Ecuador to fine dining in France (below)



THE EXPLAINER

What's a UNESCO Intangible?

French cuisine and the Uzbek art of wit have something in common

FIRST, THE BASICS

What's UNESCO?

Part of the mission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization is to designate sites of universal cultural value, such as Machu Picchu and Angkor.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE

Traditions Need Safeguarding Too

In 2008, UNESCO began designating living cultural traditions such as **Sicilian puppet theater** and **Mexico's Day of the Dead** ceremonies.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

A Growing List

There are 314 practices currently on the list. The latest

batch includes the **Uzbek art of wit** performed at festivals, **Kyrgyzstan yurt building**, and the **Brazilian capoeira** martial art.

IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE, REALLY

Take the French Table



The **French gastronomic meal** has elevated eating to an art form. There's its structure (apéritif, starter, main, cheese, dessert, liqueurs); appropriate wine

pairings; and an elegant table setting. Passed from one generation to the next, the tradition cements social ties and marks French identity.

WHAT'S IT TO US?

Peace Plan

The list is as varied as the world's cultures themselves. And as important to fight for, says Cécile Duvelle of UNESCO. "The more globalized the world becomes, the more important it is not to lose forever these traditional roots." It goes back to UNESCO's mission to promote peace through respect of the world's varied cultures and common humanity. —AMANDA RUGGERI

TRAVELING WITH KIDS

EUROPE BY MOTOR HOME

Q. We'd like to explore Europe by camper this summer. What do we need to know? Summer is peak season in Europe, so reserve at least six weeks in advance of travel. Motor homes offer convenience for families. You can tour the continent while everything you need to sleep, eat, and shower is right there on the road with you. Most rentals require a set number of nights depending on the country in which you rent. They include unlimited mileage and allow for cross-European travel, but gas is expensive and city driving can be stressful. Read your contract: Insurance coverage often limits the countries you can drive in, and roadside assistance may not be included. Bed linens and kitchen utensils are offered for an extra fee. To save money, pick up essentials on the road. Just don't forget a Frisbee: It'll help break the ice at campsites even if you don't speak the language.

—Heather Greenwood Davis



A camper van parked along Loch Lomond, Scotland

STEVE D'AMICO/GETTY IMAGES (HAT), REBECCA MARSHALL/LAIF/REDUX (FOOD), JULIAN EALES/ALAMY (CAMPER), CRAIG MINNELLY/AURA PHOTOGRAPHICS (WASK)

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RAIL EUROPE



Luminous landscape:
Scalloped ice shapes
a glacier cave in
southern Iceland.



YOUR SHOT

OVER ICE

Magical moonscape? Try earthbound Iceland. “This shows a cave formed in an outlet glacier by the huge Vatnajökull ice cap,” says French photographer Romain Loubeyre, who lives in Dubai. “Exploring it felt like exploring another planet. The colors, the light, and the shapes are found nowhere else.”

Getting the shot Glacier caves are a challenge to photograph. “Water drips from the ceiling, winds rush through the passage, and the cold freezes the camera,” says Loubeyre. “I played hide-and-seek with the water to keep the lens dry.” **What has stayed with him** “These caves melt more each year, a sign that some of nature’s most spectacular artworks are in danger of disappearing.”

What we liked “Shooting photos in a glacier cave,” says Adventure Editorial Director Mary Anne Potts, “requires an adventurous spirit. The ribbon of ice draws the eye to the focal point—the hiker’s red jacket—setting off the remarkable blue and black tones of the ice.”

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LUCERNE

The city of Lucerne is a medieval stunner with days' worth of daytrips across its long, jagged, cobalt blue lake of the same name and up majestic peaks by rail or boot. In its cobbled center, you can visit farmers markets, peek at paintings on the 14th-century Chapel Bridge, or check out the outrageously fun Swiss Museum of Transport.



ZERMATT

The 14,992-foot Matterhorn juts into the sky above this car-free town of chalets like a devil's tooth, or a rocky Santa hat. No other mountain compares. Watch its angular look change during a hike along its rocky base or a three-cable cable car ride up to Glacier Paradise, where all-year ski runs drop into Italy. Don't miss the glacier palace and its glistening ice sculptures.

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In Switzerland, it's the getting there that's half the fun.



LAKE GENEVA REGION

French Switzerland's biggest city sits on the west end of Lake Geneva (Lac Léman), a walker's city of medieval streets and farmers markets, with nearby attractions reached by boat, train, or car. Highlights include a view of a century's worth of gold medals at Lausanne's Olympic Museum and a walk through hilly lakeside vineyards at Lavaux.



INTERLAKEN

Switzerland's adventure capital sits between lakes in the Bernese Oberland region and offers year-round activities (sky diving, skiing, rappelling) that get you up into some of the Alps' most dramatic scenery. A fun nearby base is Lauterbrunnen, home to the "valley of 72 waterfalls" that inspired J.R.R. Tolkien to create the setting for *The Lord of the Rings*.



ST. MORITZ

Surrounded by quiet villages of the Engadin valley, St. Moritz buzzes all year, but is known as the birthplace of winter sports. That's seen in its ski runs, bobsled tracks, cross-country "ski marathon," epic après-ski scene, and of course, rows of ritzy boutiques. In summer, attention turns to eBike trails along with horse-drawn carriage rides to villages like Val Fex.

Want more? Check out National Geographic's 50 Classic Swiss Experiences travel-planning map at nationalgeographic.com/switzerland.

CELEBRATIONS

METROPOLITAN MILESTONES

50 YEARS It's been that long since the von Trapp kids harmonized in *The Sound of Music*, but visitors can still sing along in Salzburg, Austria, the city where the classic movie was made. See puppets perform the musical at the Salzburg Marionette Theater, and cruise like the choral family on Fräulein Maria's Bicycle Tour to scenic sites from the film.

100 YEARS With its own built-in noisemaker in the form of the world's second largest outdoor organ, San Diego's **Balboa Park** has been ready for a birthday bash since launching at the 1915 Panama-California expo. For its centennial, the 1,200-acre park has opened its California Tower—which features 360-degree views of the city—to the public for the first time in 80 years.

1,000 YEARS On December 20, **Leipzig**, Germany, will have its cake and 1,000 candles, too, when its entire populace (plus guests) shares the massive dessert in the city center to close the yearlong millennium party for its first documented mention. The trade city that has nurtured musical maestros and renowned painters will honor its heritage during StadtFestTage, or Festival Week, May 31 to June 7. —HANNAH LOTT-SCHWARTZ



The hills are still alive in Austria.



Sally's veggie pizza

LOCAL FLAVOR

A Slice of New Haven

Two Connecticut pizzerias go pie to pie

FRANK PEPE PIZZERIA

Origin: In 1925, after scrapping a plan to bake and deliver bread, immigrants Frank and Filomena Pepe, from the Amalfi coast town of Maiori, started cranking out oblong tomato pies in a coke- (now coal-) fired brick oven at their Wooster Square bakery in New Haven, Connecticut. **Famous for:** Consider your choice of toppings as you stand in line. Purists tout the original, with crushed San Marzano tomatoes, olive oil, and grated Romano. But the white clam pizza—created in the 1960s when Pepe crowned a crust with a handful of the briny littleneck clams he served as an appetizer—has arguably eclipsed Pepe's prototype in popularity (those in the know add bacon). **Strategy:** For a shorter line during weekends, walk around the corner to the Spot, Pepe's original bakery—less atmosphere, same pizza.

SALLY'S APIZZA

Origin: Trained as a *pizzaiolo* by his uncle Frank Pepe, Salvatore Consiglio struck out on his own, opening Sally's in 1938 and sparking a rivalry that continues to polarize New Haveners, Yalies, and presidents (Bill and Hillary Clinton frequented Sally's as law students; Ronald Reagan reportedly preferred Pepe's). **Famous for:** Devotees extol the tangy sauce and claim the blistered crust holds up to more toppings than other "apizza" joints. Try the Garden Special, with tomato, mozzarella, onion, zucchini, and basil, washed down with a Foxon Park white birch beer (also served at Pepe's), made in nearby East Haven. **Strategy:** In New Haven, mozzarella isn't a given. Make sure to order it as a topping if you can't imagine your pie without it. Don't forget cash. Sally's doesn't accept credit cards. —Margaret Loftus

LINES TOO LONG? TRY MODERN APIZZA, KITCHEN ZINC, ZUPPARDI'S, OR BAR.

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NEW SEASON
SUNDAYS 9P



ADVENTURE 101

Get Off the Road in Utah

Moab offers biking trails for every ability level

SOUTHEASTERN UTAH, marked by huge expanses of sandstone, deep canyons, and striking buttes, is about as close to lunar travel as you can get without leaving the ground. Under the desert's brilliant blue skies, bizarre reddish statues, arches, and domes soar out of the earth. Decades ago, mountain bikers started pedaling the craggy old mining roads that thread these lunar landscapes, and the town of Moab became a center of adventure. Since 2008, locals have dramatically expanded Moab's trail network by building more than 100 miles of new single-track trails that

A couple bike on a Navajo sandstone trail along Moab's arduous Slickrock loop.

cater to a wide range of abilities. "You have slickrock, forests, alpine meadows, and outstanding views from pretty much anyplace," says Sandy Freethey, committee chair for Grand County Trail Mix, the trail-building group that led the expansion. "To me it's one of the most beautiful places on Earth."

GETTING STARTED It's helpful to have a basic level of cardiovascular fitness to enjoy mountain biking. Rent a full-suspension mountain bike (from \$55) and helmet at one of the downtown stores, such as Poison Spider Bicycles or Rim Cyclery. These bikes' front and rear shocks dampen jolts, and their knobby tires grip the trails. If you brought your

own bike and have experience, simply buy a trail map, and ride right from town to expert trails like Amasa Back or Pipe Dream. Want more guidance? Hire an outfitter in Moab for everything from introductory half-day lessons (from \$90 per person, including bike rental) to full-day tours for intermediate riders and multiday camping-and-biking adventures in nearby Canyonlands National Park (three days from \$800).

TEST YOUR WHEELS Even experienced bikers must get used to riding on exposed slickrock. "People get freaked out at first," says pro mountain biker Kelly Magelky. "Just commit and believe in the ability of your tires to stick to the rock." Magelky also advises starting small. The Bar M Loop, a new 30-mile nest of single tracks, features beginner, intermediate, and advanced loops that lead over petrified sand dunes with views of Arches National Park.

THE WHOLE ENCHILADA Seasoned cyclists arrange rides through companies such as Coyote Shuttle and Roadrunner Shuttle to the top of famous routes like the Porcupine Rim Trail, a 13.3-mile ribbon of double and single tracks. Studded with rocks and drops, it traverses slabs of slickrock and piñon-juniper woodland to views over scenic Castle Valley. Looking for more? Moab's most hair-raising challenge is the Whole Enchilada, a 26.2-mile route from the alpine meadows and aspen grove of the La Sal Mountains 7,000 vertical feet down to the Colorado River.

POST-BIKING RITUALS After riding, dusty spandex-clad bikers head to Milt's Stop & Eat, a beloved 1954 diner that sells local beef and buffalo burgers and milkshakes whirled with handmade ice cream. Come evening, bartenders at the Moab Brewery sling beers named for local trails and bike parts to sun-bleached bikers, hikers, and climbers.

SUNNY WEATHER In summer, Moab swells with vacationers and the temperatures can top 100 degrees, but because the air is so dry, mornings and evenings stay cool for biking. Temperatures typically hover in the 70s in fall and spring, and in April, wildflowers and cactus blooms freckle the desert. —*Kate Siber*

A man with dark hair and a blue t-shirt is hiking up a rocky, reddish-brown trail. He is wearing a large, orange Osprey backpack with multiple straps and buckles. The background shows a vast, mountainous landscape under a clear blue sky. The man is looking off to the side with a determined expression.

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LIBATIONS

Around the World With a Twist

Toast these destinations through their signature drinks



SINGAPORE

Singapore Sling

This year marks the 100th birthday for the tall tippie, which was allegedly first made in its namesake city by combining London dry gin, cherry Heering liqueur, Bénédictine, lime juice, soda, and angostura bitters. You can still order the classic at its birthplace—Singapore's Raffles Hotel.



PERU

Pisco Sour

In preparation and history, the pisco sour is complex. There's a century-old dispute between Chile and Peru as to which country invented it (Peru apparently wins). The cocktail calls for lime, simple syrup, pisco, and angostura bitters, but Peru's version needs an egg white for its frothy top layer.



DIJON, FRANCE

Kir Royale

Named for Frenchman Félix Kir—a priest and WWII resistance fighter who became the mayor of Dijon—this fizzy aperitif surprisingly has a feminine quality. Crème de cassis, a dark, sweet liqueur made from black currants, is poured into a flute and topped with dry champagne.



LONDON, ENGLAND

Pimm's Cup

Often served with fruit, cucumber, mint, and carbonated lemonade, this English drink is a summer staple. In the mid-1800s, London restaurateur James Pimm blended liqueurs, herbs, and quinine with gin, and bottled it as Pimm's No. 1. By 1900, it was sipped throughout the British Empire.



NEW ORLEANS

Sazerac

Legend has it that a 19th-century New Orleans apothecary made the world's first cocktail by mixing his bitters with a popular French cognac, Sazerac de Forge et Fils. Now the official cocktail of the Big Easy, the recipe evolved to rye whiskey, simple syrup, Herbsaint, and Peychaud's bitters.



MEXICO

Michelada

This hair-of-the-dog beer mixture doesn't have an exact recipe. You'll need cold cerveza and an ice-filled glass with a salted rim, then improvise with lime, tomato juice, and a bevy of spices and condiments. In Mexico, your bartender might even add chicken bouillon if you're looking extra faint.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ELAN FLEISHER/AGE FOTOSTOCK, ILDI PAPPAGE FOTOSTOCK, LAYLA PUJOL, ERIC FURAN/CHESHOTS/GETTY IMAGES, RANDY HARRIS/REDUX, SARAH ROSS/MY CHOCOLATE THERAPY



PROBLEM SOLVED

Without Legroom to Stand On

By CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Q. Can the coach flying experience get any worse? For years, airlines have been cutting services to keep base fares low. In February, Delta's basic economy class tickets became nonrefundable and ineligible for upgrades. The next squeeze is likely to be felt with seats getting moved closer together. Discount carriers such as Spirit and Allegiant already offer particularly tight quarters, and most aviation insiders agree that it's merely a question of when a newly cramped configuration will take over as the standard. Last fall, reports surfaced of a new "economy minus" section from a major American airline, with less legroom and other downgrades. Though such fares might help you afford to fly, says aviation journalist John Walton, "whether 'economy minus' is worth it to you depends on what you value." Booking one of these tickets—in which the terms are disclosed though easy to ignore—may save a few dollars, but it also tells the airline that you want less room and more restrictions. And that will only lead to more negatives.

NEED HELP?

Editor at Large Christopher Elliott is our consumer advocate and author of *How to Be the World's Smartest Traveler* (National Geographic Books).

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Q. What does the news about improved U.S.-Cuba relations mean for travelers? In December 2014, the U.S. restored diplomatic relations with Cuba, but the trade embargo and travel restrictions have yet to be lifted for U.S. residents. That'll require an act of Congress; a bipartisan bill introduced in January called for an end to the travel ban. "Can Americans jump on a plane today to visit Cuba?" asks Terry Dale, president of the United States Tour Operators Association. "The short answer is no." Only people such as journalists and Cuban Americans can travel to the island on their own. The rest of us can join a tour group designated as an educational exchange, including packages operated by, ahem, National Geographic Expeditions. The latest changes ease requirements for such tours, which offer unique experiences like dining at a family-owned *paladar* (restaurant) and meeting local musicians. Another benefit of the recent détente: Travelers can bring back \$400 of goods, including up to \$100 of rum and cigars.

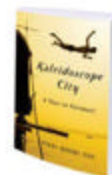
BOOKSHELF

Great New Reads



A PASSION FOR PARIS
By DAVID DOWNIE

From its alleys and ateliers to its cafés and cathedrals, Downie crafts an infatuated valentine to the City of Light.



KALEIDOSCOPE CITY
By PIERS MOORE EDE

Sacred. Seamy. Virtually impenetrable. Ede makes sense of Varanasi, India, by portraying its people: sweet-makers, silk-weavers, even the dom rajas who cremate bodies by the Ganges.



ENGLAND AND OTHER STORIES
By GRAHAM SWIFT

With these 25 stories of seemingly everyday events, Swift evokes the overlooked soul of today's England.

—DON GEORGE

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TRENDING

The Kids Are All Right

By COSTAS CHRIST

THE DAYS OF CHILDREN WAITING around for grown-ups to save the planet are over. Nowadays, they're taking conservation action into their own hands. Consider Olivia and Carter Ries from Fayetteville, Georgia. At ages 7 and 8, with help from their father, they started OMG, shorthand for One More Generation. Their peer-to-peer organization empowers children to become environmental leaders, with a focus on endangered species. "If we do not do something today to save the rhino, it will become extinct in my lifetime," says Carter, now 13. "We travel around the world to mobilize children to save nature," adds Olivia, who at 12 also confided to me that "age discrimination" is a problem they contend with.

Nepalese school-children embrace World Environment Day at the forest of Gokarna, near Kathmandu.

Tempting as it is for adults to chuckle about their seriousness, homeschooled Olivia and Carter are five years into propelling a kids movement. And they are not alone. In Australia, nine-year-old Ava McQueen spoke at the 2014 World Parks Congress last November, where she introduced her idea for "Party Like a Wild Animal" fundraising events. In Costa Rica, Janine Licare and Aislin Livingstone launched Kids Saving the Rainforest when they were nine years old. More than 15 years later, the group spearheads efforts in 18 countries, from encouraging school projects to building monkey bridges. Obviously, kids cannot do everything on their own. But passionate advocates of all ages can raise environmental awareness to new heights.

■ WHAT DO YOU THINK? TWEET US @NATGEOTRAVEL.

HOTEL MAKEOVER

CONTROVERSY AS AN AMENITY

THIS SUMMER, Washington, D.C.'s notorious **Watergate Hotel** reopens after a \$125 million renovation that's reminiscent of its pre-criminal glory, complete with retro staff uniforms and old-school service. But what of the scandal that ousted Richard Nixon from office? The infamous inn embraces it—some of the event rooms are even named after



key players from the 1972 break-in.

National historic status prevented most restorations to the building's exterior, so the hotel retains its initial 1960s design, which brings to mind an ocean liner floating on the Potomac. Indoors, sculptural Italian furniture, bathrooms with floor-to-ceiling marble, and ornate metalwork pay homage to the original architect's vision. Opulent extras include an expanded spa, panoramic views of the river, and no cover-ups but the plush blankets.

Now, strategically placed tape no longer stops doors from locking, and the phone taps are long gone. It'll cost about \$400 per night to sleep in the place that changed political history and led to the first and only resignation of an American president—and maybe this time Woodward and Bernstein will show up only to check in. —*Jennifer Billock*



The Watergate Hotel in D.C.

NARENDRA SHRESTHA/EPIC CORBIS (TREES), CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES (NIXON), BROOKS KRAFT/CORBIS (HOTEL)



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The Great Theatre of Havana, home to the Cuban National Ballet

MY CITY

Cuba on the Cusp

Change looms, but Havana remains as quirky as ever BY CHRISTOPHER P. BAKER

ONE RECENT NIGHT in Havana, I stared out the window of my friend's house in the now faded middle-class Vedado neighborhood. A weary 1956 Chevrolet Bel Air wheezed past, trailed by a beaten-up Soviet-era Lada taxi rattling over the potholes. The air smelled sweetly of mimosa and, vaguely, mildew. Wooden window shutters creaked on rusted hinges, brushed by a cooling breeze sweeping in from the sea.

"I want to live here," I said with a sigh. My friend Mari turned to me. "Why not marry Jessica?" she asked, speaking of her teenage daughter. She didn't appear to be joking. Cuba constantly delivers such curve balls. Whenever I'm in Havana, I feel as if I'm living inside either a swoony novel or a Hollywood thriller.

Mari's shocker sent me in search of a drink. I headed to the nearby Hotel Nacional for a mojito and cigar (like Che Guevara, I prefer Montecristos) at the open-air terrace bar, where a five-piece band spiced things up with hot salsa. The landmark 1930s grande dame is still the preferred hotel for visiting bigwigs—Lucky Luciano famously called a mobster summit here in 1946, ostensibly to honor an up-and-coming singer named Frank Sinatra.

My favorite nightclub, Gato Tuerto, is down the hill on Calle O. This tiny 1950s supper club has been spruced up for tourist consumption, but patrons are mostly Cubans and local expats, and I still sense that Sinatra and his Rat Pack might saunter in. Gato Tuerto reflects one of Havana's unique

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enchantments: its aura of pre-revolution redux. Throughout the city, retro nightclubs, worse-for-wear Detroit imports, and grimy advertisements for Hotpoint and Singer on weathered facades cause double takes.

I recently hailed a *colectivo* (shared taxi)—every visitor should do so—and jammed in with six Cubans as the circa-1948 Cadillac cruised down Avenida Linea to the rhythm of a rumba on the radio. My destination? El Cocinero, one of Havana's trendiest *paladares* (private restaurants). A spiral staircase corkscrewing up past a redbrick chimney spilled me onto the chic rooftop restaurant. I savored gazpacho, goat cheese baguette, and garlic octopus tapas alfresco. The city's young *farandula* (bohemian in-crowd) chatted over cocktails before streaming downstairs to the adjoining Fábrica de Arte, an avant-garde cultural venue that wouldn't be out of place in New York City's Meatpacking District.

Don't believe anyone who tells you Havana is sclerotic. Or, worse, that the food is boring. Chic clubs and *paladares* have blossomed since 2011, thanks to Raúl Castro's economic reforms, bringing heapings of style and good food.

But most Cubans are too hard up to partake of Havana's new "middle class" spots. The city is best appreciated on their simple terms: the farmers markets, such as at Calles 19 and F, displaying mini-mountains of guavas, *marañons*, and other tropical fruits; the youth gathered on the seafront Malecón promenade at night, gossiping and flirting over shared bottles of rum; or ice cream enjoyed beneath the dappled shade of jagüey trees drooping their aerial roots to the ground at Parque Coppelia. Everyone stands in line at Coppelia (supposedly the world's biggest ice creamery).

I love strolling along Vedado's Calles 17 and 19, lined with beaux arts buildings such as the Museo de Artes Decorativas, lavishly embellished as if the prerevolutionary countess owner were still there; and the mansion at Calles 19 and H that houses UNEAC (National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists). Ground zero for intellectual life in Havana, UNEAC hosts regular *peñas*—musical and literary gatherings.

Then there's the six-lane Malecón boulevard stretching



Cuban contrasts: Hotel Saratoga's exclusive rooftop pool (top) in Old Havana, revolutionary slogans on the streets (above)

along the Atlantic seashore, linking Vedado to Habana Vieja (Old Havana). It offers a microcosm of Havana life: cigar-sellers, fishers casting off from giant inner tubes, musicians practicing guitars and trumpets. Since I usually have camera in hand, what should be a 30-minute stroll can take me half a day, so many are the distractions.

Habana Vieja preserves one of the great historical cities of the New World. Castles, convents, and palatial mansions dating back centuries still reign majestically over plazas and cobbled streets haunted by the boot steps of conquistadores and, infamously, by Ernest Hemingway's ghost. Visiting friends invariably ask me to guide them to Bodeguita del Medio, a graffiti-strewn bar where Hemingway is said to have supped mojitos: The reality is that he rarely drank there. It's a stone's throw from Plaza de la Catedral, with its 18th-century baroque cathedral.

Off the plaza's south-west corner, on Callejón de

Chorro, is Taller Experimental de la Gráfica, a graphics cooperative where artists engrave and print one-of-a-kind pieces on antique hand-primed presses. While here, I usually call in at Dulcería Bianchini, a cubbyhole coffee shop where Italian-Swiss owner Katia serves too-good-to-resist croissants, quiches, and tarts, plus frothy cappuccinos. One of my favorite *paladares*—Doña Eutimía—adjoins the workshop. This is the place to enjoy down-home creole cooking, such as *ropa vieja* (braised lamb prepared with garlic, tomatoes, and spices) served with hills of white rice and black beans.

A few weeks after Mari's indecent proposal, I am back in Havana and pay a visit. To my relief Mari tells me that she and her husband, Jorge, have reconsidered having me marry Jessica. Then she throws me another Cuban curve ball: "Jorge and I can divorce and you can marry me." I smile. With an urban culture as eccentric and enigmatic as this, no wonder I find Havana one of the most engaging cities in the world.

CHRISTOPHER P. BAKER's many books include *Mi Moto Fidel: Motorcycling Through Castro's Cuba*. He also leads tours of Cuba for National Geographic Expeditions; for the itinerary, visit ngexpeditions.com/cuba.



Located in the home of filmmaker Rafael Rosales, Madrigal is one of Havana's burgeoning privately owned restaurants.



DURBAN

INTO THE ZULU KINGDOM

Handcrafted
Zulu bangles at
the African Art
Centre, Durbanites
(opposite) head out
for a morning surf on
the Bay of Plenty.

SURF'S UP IN SOUTH AFRICA'S CITY OF COASTAL COOL—SPRINGBOARD TO MOUNTAIN HEIGHTS AND SAFARI SIGHTS

BY **GEORGE W. STONE**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **KRISTA ROSSOW**





"READY FOR COMPLETE SENSORY OVERLOAD?"

asks Dane Forman, a surf-nut videographer with a hipster moustache. He walks me through Warwick Junction, the hectic hub of Durban's market district and what he calls the "buzzing center of South Africa." Roosters on the loose, potatoes by the ton, township music blasting from overloaded lorries, beaded Zulu *isicholo* hats, and nearby, at the Victoria Street Market, Indian spices like "Atom Bomb" make up this multiblock, multi-racial mash-up in South Africa's third largest city. "Pretty kiff, right?" says Forman, using the surfer slang for "cool."

Durbanites don't mind that their sun-drenched coast is overshadowed by Johannesburg to the northwest or Cape Town to the southwest. "We're culturally richer and a bit more out there," says architect Nokuthula Msomi. "You can't just live in your own bubble when cultures as different as the Zulu and Indian are overlapping all around you." Creative social enterprise is helping to redefine the city in the post-apartheid era. Cargo-container cafés, craft beers, and pop-up green markets have turned "Durbs" into a city on the verge. And in the wilds beyond, "we've got the bush, the 'Berg, and the braai," says blogger Nicola Ashe. Grab your beads and go.



Hippos face off in St. Lucia Lake—Africa's largest estuary—at iSimangaliso Wetland Park. A Zulu tour guide (left) wears a traditional animal skin collar at Shakaland, a cultural village.



ISIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK

Embracing Your Inner Animal

“Rhino on the road!” Four words every safarigoer dreams of which—as poachers mercilessly advance—are becoming as rare as rhinos themselves. Today, however, all that separates us from our endangered object of obsession is 30 feet of gravel and a sense of awe.

Leopards, with their rosettes, are only occasionally easier to spot than rambling rhinos. The uMkhuze Game Reserve is a vast veld beloved by birders and populated by pachyderms, giraffes, wild dogs, lions, zebras, and busy little dung beetles. With such a menagerie on the prowl it seems surprising that they’re all hiding. How does a guide find them? “Symmetrical shapes and movement,” says Rhys Scott-Dawkins, director of Endless Summer Tours, a Durban-based operator. And with that he spots an African crowned eagle in the sky and picks up the trail of an elusive pack of wild dogs.

uMkhuze is part of iSimangaliso Wetland Park, South Africa’s first World Heritage site and an interlinked set of eight ecosystems that stretch from the Indian Ocean to interior grasslands. Its name means “miracle and wonder,” and it’s easy to see why on a sunrise kayak paddle in Lake St. Lucia, Africa’s largest estuary. After nearly capsizing in croc-infested waters the color of chocolate milk, I sensed wonder at the miracle of my own survival.

WHERE TO EAT

TABLE GRAZING

BUNNY CHOW Durban dining reduced to two words. But this ubiquitous dish—a hollowed-out loaf of white bread filled with piquant mutton, prawn, chicken, or veggie curry—is just one local flavor to savor in a city hungrily embracing craft cuisine and the farm-to-table mantra. Here’s a menu to dazzle your palate any time of day.

SUNRISE Hop in for a street art spectacle and a morning cuppa at the collegial Corner Cafe diner with a spread of breakfast and lunchtime sweets and savories.

BREAKFAST Relish a breezy brekkie of sweet potato *rosti* or a hearty lunch of prawn cakes in the garden of

Freedom Cafe, crafted from colorful shipping containers.

LUNCH Locals say that Indian sugarcane workers invented bunny chow as an edible lunch box. Try Durban’s iconic dish at the century-old Hotel Britannia.

SNACK Unity Brasserie’s tasty offerings—*periperi* chicken livers, curries, grilled lamb, and beef pies—is but a prelude to the bar’s craft ales and lagers, brewed right across the street.

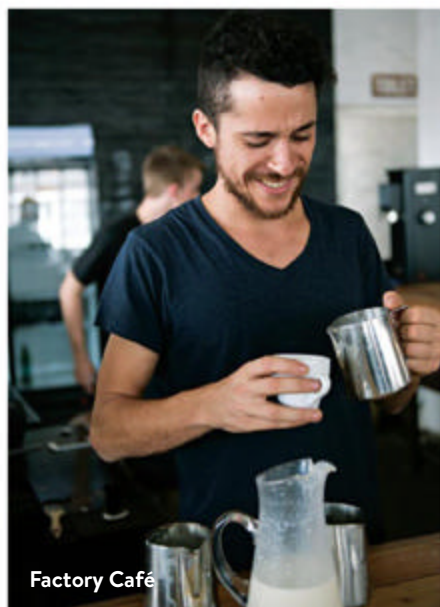
DINNER Market Restaurant’s farm-to-table dishes—from butternut soufflé and apple-stuffed pork belly to grilled South African game—are served by candlelight in Durban’s dreamiest courtyard.



A couple enjoy alfresco dining at the Corner Cafe. Opposite: The majestic Amphitheatre attracts hikers to the Drakensberg area.



IT'S SO MONUMENTAL THAT IT NEARLY CONCEALS
ANOTHER SUPERLATIVE: TUGELA FALLS, THE WORLD'S
SECOND-HIGHEST WATERFALL, A SILVERY RIBBON
GASCADING FROM THE CLIFF FACE.



Earth-toned Indian spices await buyers at Victoria Street Market in central Durban.

WHAT TO DO DURBAN DIVERSIONS

STREET SCENE For a pan-African spectacle, head to Warwick Junction, the hub of Durban's historic market district. Take a walking tour with Markets of Warwick, see mountains of potatoes at the morning market, sample Indian spices at Victoria Street Market, buy colorful Zulu crafts at the bead market.

BEST BUZZ Up-with-the-sun Durbanites know their beans. The city is in the midst of a coffee revolution with roasters and baristas battling for cappuccino supremacy. Housed within the Colombo Coffee & Tea Roastery, the Factory Café serves up flat whites with flair and espressos with edge. A spare breakfast-and-lunch menu lets the beans do the talking.

NIGHT BRIGHT In the 1960s, jazz musicians like Duke Ellington and John Coltrane brought African sounds to American ears. The Chairman is a retro/

chic jazz club with a twist; here, western jazz is reappropriated and remixed with township beats.

SKY HIGH A mere 500 steps separate you from Durban's most spectacular view. Strap in for the Adventure Walk at Moses Mabhida Stadium, a muscular march up the 350-foot arch that spans the city's World Cup soccer field. Two powerful spans merge to form the stadium's arch, a symbol inspired by the South African flag.

BOARDWALK EMPIRE Got kids? The Golden Mile is the place to go for bike rentals, beach bumming, and anachronistic kicks at Funworld Amusement Park. uShaka Marine World anchors one end of the promenade; it's a fish tank of activity, including the Wet 'n Wild slide park and SeaWorld, the largest aquarium in the Southern Hemisphere.

A guided afternoon boat cruise provides safe distance from the hungry hippos. “No one’s yawn is as big as the big guy’s yawn,” says Stacey Venue of Shoreline Safaris, our boat captain and guide. We see giant kingfishers, herons, yellow weavers, and pods of slumbering hippos—dozens of them resting up for nocturnal adventures that keep locals on their toes. “At night we sometimes have hippos walking the streets,” Venue says. “We call them the ‘townies’—they’re looking for grass to eat.”

THE DRAKENSBERG RANGE

Enter the Dragon

It takes three hours to drive from Durban to the Drakensberg, a misty, mountainous region so epic that your mind turns to Middle-Earth. Native South African J. R. R. Tolkien was so taken by the cliffs and kopjes (hills) of the approximately 600-mile range that they inspired his imagined realm. It’s easy to see why. At sunrise, rising fog makes “Dragon Mountains,” as the Afrikaners called it, resemble a mythical beast rousing from slumber.

Its Zulu name is equally evocative: uKhahlamba, “barrier of up-pointed spears.” Southern Berg, the region around the vertiginous Sani Pass, contains a rich repository of rock paintings by the San hunter-gatherers. In the Central Berg, hikers head to Giant’s Castle for more than 25 trails. And in the Northern Berg, the three-mile-wide, 3,280-foot-high Amphitheatre is a supreme rock star. It’s so monumental that it nearly conceals

another superlative: Tugela Falls, the world’s second highest waterfall, a silvery ribbon cascading from the cliff face.

Trails leading toward the Amphitheatre cut across mountain meadows lined with proteas and forest hollows populated by rock hyrax, cartoonishly cute furry critters that are, improbably, the closest living evolutionary relative to elephants. “When we started hiking this morning, a mob of guinea fowl ran around our cottage,” says Jemma Dicks, a London-based hiker on her second visit to the Drakensberg. She stayed at Thendele Lodge, a KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife-run camp situated on a hillside within the park’s boundary, a perfect starting point for sunrise hikes.

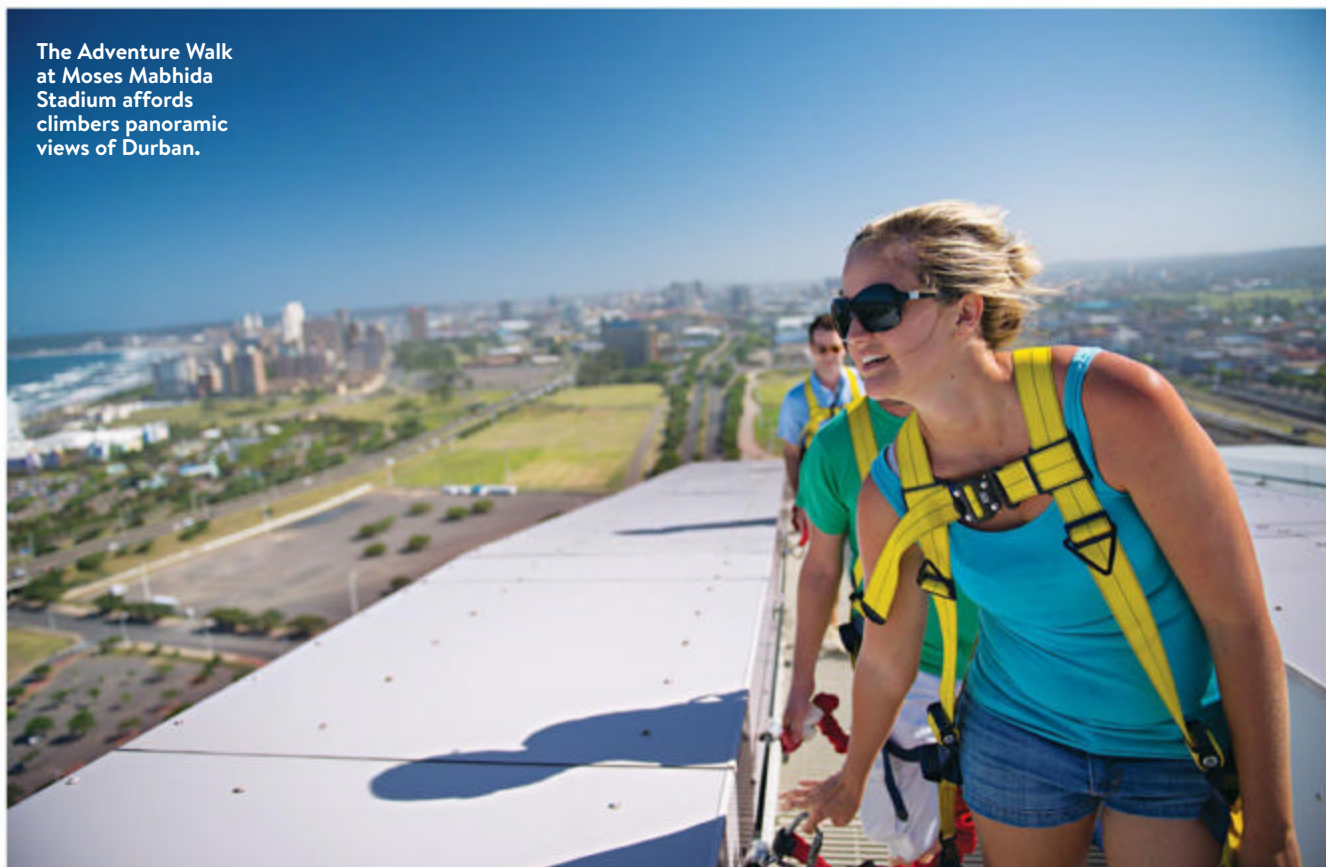
Outside the park’s perimeter the Berg House offers a panoramic view. “We gave up cows and came here to farm people instead,” says Cantal Piccione, who, with her husband, Vaughan, transformed a pasture into a hilltop B&B. A pack of horses nibbles the grass while guests watch the sun set behind the Berg, its gold light glimmering like a ring of fire. “It’s our little mountain paradise,” says Piccione. “Every day is different.”

THE NORTH COAST

From Urban Durban to the Beach

Beach-bound Durban is considered one of the world’s art deco capitals, but locals are more likely to see their city as an urban jumble than an architectural gem. This fragmentation was reinforced by apartheid-era urban schemes that created physical barriers to cultural exchange. “In many ways, Durban

The Adventure Walk at Moses Mabhida Stadium affords climbers panoramic views of Durban.



was designed to exclude,” says architect Mark Bellingan. “Even today, most people never get into the fabric of the city.” To remedy this, Bellingan and his buddies launched BESETdurban, a “social experiment” through which they lead narrated “archi-walks” around town. One recent walk was so crowded—some 400 people showed up—that it looked like a protest demonstration. In a way it was: a pedestrian rally to reconnect locals with their city.

The buildings don’t end at the beach; they just take a sandier shape. Seaside Michelangelos sculpt sports cars, crocodiles, and Nelson Mandelas in the sand along the Golden Mile, a four-mile-long promenade that runs south from the Umgeni River to Durban Harbour. Revitalizing this strand democratizes the city’s shoreline from dawn (when the surfers arrive) to dusk (when families stroll). On weekends, the brunch set kvetches at Circus Circus Beach Café, and body-boarding teens scarf down burgers and *tjips* (fries) at Afro’s Chicken Shop.

uMhlanga, Durban’s neighboring town north of the Umgeni River, is an enclave of luxury inns and restaurants. Removed from the city’s buzz, this beachside settlement is less surfer bravado and more all-day mimosa. It’s the only place in South Africa I saw a Rolls-Royce pull up to a valet stand. The terrace of the Oyster Box hotel, a grand dame that has transported the Dorothy Draper aesthetic to the Indian Ocean, is a cinematic perch for sipping sundowners above the sand and surf.

ISITHUMBA AND BEYOND

Heritage in the Heartland

“The river is our laundromat, old men have three wives, and there are chickens in the yard. You can see all this yourself—it’s what I mean by living villages,” says Thabo Mokgope, a guide who specializes in cultural tours to the tribal lands around Durban. The Zulu are South Africa’s largest ethnic group, and their communities, ranging from farm settlements to dense townships, are scattered throughout KwaZulu-Natal’s Valley of 1,000 Hills. Mokgope brings guests to iSithumba, a village bound by tradition but open to engagement.

From a car window, you see rolling green hills and dusty red roads, children in uniforms marching home from school, and beehive huts called iQhugwane—traditional homes that often sit beside brick houses. But walking through a Zulu settlement is an immersion that bridges experiential and cultural divides. Mokgope points out the hues of homes. “Color is how we express ourselves,” he says. “We take visitors from one house to another and don’t inundate anyone. We talk, we eat, we laugh. The goal is to make connections.” Mokgope’s narrative ranges from the history of Shaka, the military leader who formed a powerful Zulu kingdom in 1818, to the culture and crafts of the people. The focus is on the legend of the king at Shakaland, about two hours away from iSithumba. Around the set of the television epic *Shaka Zulu*, the park presents a choreographed spectacle including warrior dances, pounding drums, and weaving displays. The tour wraps up with a taste of Umqombothi, a beer made from maize and sorghum porridge. It’s like a Zulu’s microbrew—and it packs a punch.

Editor at Large **GEORGE W. STONE** lives in Singapore. **KRISTA ROSSOW** is a photographer based in Eugene, Oregon.



African Art Centre

WHERE TO SHOP LOCAL COLOR

It’s not just cultures that are collaborating in Durban. A push for accessible design, contemporary crafts, and home-grown fashions is behind an increasingly visible creative movement. What defines local style? “Durban has a very African soul,” says Sonia Vosloo, owner of Shoppe, which sells South African arts and home wares. “There’s no pretentiousness here—locals are down-to-earth, diverse, and supportive of one another’s efforts. We’ve almost created our own culture.”

SHOPPE Track down everything from ceramics to succulents at this eclectic boutique specializing in home accessories, paintings, furnishings, and decorative objects made in South Africa.

AFRICAN ART CENTRE Telephone-wire baskets, wooden carvings, Zulu baskets and beadwork, landscape paintings, and modern jewelry star at this nonprofit gallery that provides employment and economic uplift for KwaZulu-Natal crafters.

THE SPACE Forget animal prints. Think angles, edges, geometric patterns, and ready-to-wear fashions with a beachy vibe at this clothing shop featuring labels from some of South Africa’s most celebrated designers.

SAVIOR BRAND CO. Hand-stitched leather goods—wallets, bags, phone and iPad sleeves—are the stock-in-trade of this hip Durban design house and coffee shop. Come for the leather, stay for a latte.

MORE ONLINE

View more photographs of Durban and its surroundings at www.natgeotravel.com.

THE INSIDER

Durban, South Africa

PORTUGUESE EXPLORER Vasco da Gama sighted Durban's harbor in 1497. It's now Africa's busiest cargo port and South Africa's third largest city, with 3.5 million residents who can trace their roots around the world.

WHAT TO SEE

Explore the city's anguished history during apartheid at the **KwaMuhle Museum**, located in the erstwhile Department of Native Affairs, where policymakers drafted the Durban System of racial segregation that laid groundwork for the national apartheid program. Interactive exhibits tell the story of black subjugation, forced relocation, and total disenfranchisement while documenting the anti-apartheid

movement, its tortuous and eventually victorious path, and its many heroes. For an immersion into the arts, crafts, and culture of the Zulu, Xhosa, Shangaan, Ndebele, and other African peoples, head to the **Phansi Museum**, where beadwork, fertility dolls, telephone-wire baskets, walking sticks, and more help unlock the mysteries of native traditions. The British sugarcane industry initiated the immigration of laborers and merchants from western India starting in the

1860s, establishing what is today the largest concentration of Indians outside of India. Mahatma Gandhi developed his philosophy of passive resistance and his political skills over a 21-year period working as a lawyer in South Africa, many of those in Durban. The **Inanda Heritage Route** links the Phoenix Settlement, which Gandhi founded in 1904 as a communal experimental farm, and the Ohlange Institute, founded by the African National Congress's first president, John Dube. It was here that Nelson Mandela voted in 1994's groundbreaking democratic election that swept him into office.

WHERE TO STAY

Urban Durban has its share of designer dens, but few rival the **Concierge Boutique Bungalows** for modern style mixed with sunny substance (and dachshund motifs). A dozen guest rooms, some with private

garden verandas, sit beside the courtyard of Freedom Café within a heritage-listed block. Breakfast is on the house, so just roll out of bed and order a latte served with a wiener-dog-shaped cookie on the side. On the beach in uMhlanga Rocks, the **Beverly Hills** hotel brings a breezy coastal California feel to the Indian Ocean. Overlooking the stony shore that gives this tony town its name, the 88-room hotel is a magnet for romantics and an oasis for spa-seekers. Next door, the **Oyster Box** is a wedding cake of a hotel and the perfect place to set your kids free (though management may disagree). It's easy to imagine Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire twirling about in this over-the-top inn. Sea-facing family rooms are ideal for little ones, though parents might opt for coastal cabanas with four-poster beds or two-tier suites with private plunge pools and ocean views.

DURBAN'S HOT NEIGHBORHOOD GLENWOOD

"Friendly hipsters"—it sounds like a fantasy, but not in the city's trendiest suburb, a low-key bastion of beards, brunches, and bungalows. Magnetic attraction draws the mustachioed set to all-day breakfasts at Parc, a spectacle of locally sourced, seasonal dishes. Corner Café is an art-filled diner that's "saving the world, one cappuccino at a time." The Glenwood Bakery is an oasis of artisanal aromas from the city's best coffees and breads. Sit down for sandwiches, or walk away with crispy croissants.



Glenwood Bakery



ATLAS



Essential Durbanisms include *ngiyabonga* (thank you), *howzit* (hello), and *sizobonana* (see you later).

Sardine shoals swim north to the coast of KwaZulu-Natal during the annual Sardine Run (May-July), one of the largest marine events in the world.

The oldest plant in the world may well be a cycad. Find it at the Durban Botanical Gardens.

NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC
TRAVELER
AWARDS

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The Inaugural World Legacy Awards

National Geographic Traveler *in partnership with ITB Berlin and the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador*
Sponsored by Adventure World

The World Legacy Awards, held in Berlin on March 5, 2015, honored five winners and ten finalists for their leadership in sustainable tourism practices. The **five category winners** were:

Earth Changers: Orange County Resorts and Hotels, India

Sense of Place: Cavallo Point Lodge, U.S.A.

Conserving the Natural World: Huilo Huilo Biological Reserve, Chile

Engaging Communities: Tropic Journeys in Nature, Ecuador

Destination Leadership: Aruba, Caribbean



Finalists (pictured above) represent: The Brando, French Polynesia; Nikoi Island, Indonesia; Gwaii Haanas National Reserve, Canada; Fogo Island Inn, Canada; and Beyond, Africa and Asia; Conservation Ecology Centre, Australia; Feynan Ecolodge, Jordan; Mukul Resort, Nicaragua; Delaware North at Yosemite, U.S.A.; Val d'Aran, Spain

The 58th Annual Adrian Awards

National Geographic Traveler *in partnership with the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI)*

National Geographic Traveler and HSMAI presented the Leader in Sustainable Tourism Platinum Adrian Award on February 23, 2015, at the Marriott Marquis hotel in New York City.

Platinum Winner: The Santa Monica Convention and Visitors Bureau for its part in creating the **Santa Monica Green Business Certification Program**, a voluntary initiative that encourages businesses to implement environmental practices. Since its inception in 2007, 83 area businesses have received their green certification.



Pictured above: Richard Peterson, Executive Vice President, Santa Monica CVB; Jackie Alvarez, Public Relations Coordinator, Santa Monica CVB; Kimberly Connaghan, VP Publisher, National Geographic Traveler; Fran Brasseaux, Executive Vice President, HSMAI and Executive Director, HSMAI Foundation

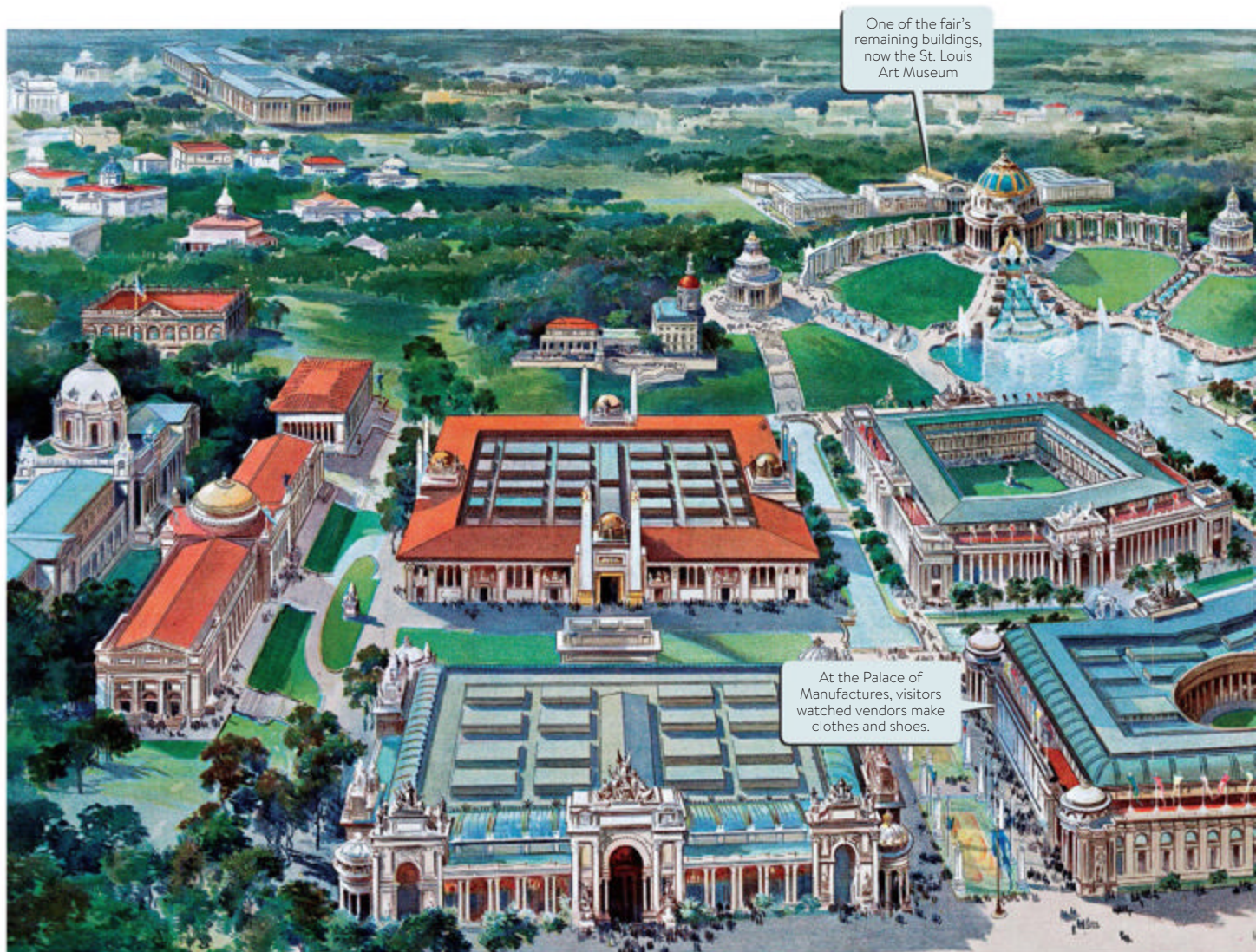
THE UNISPHERE
ANCHORED THE
1964-65 NEW YORK
WORLD'S FAIR.

You can still
see the globe
today at Flushing
Meadows Corona
Park in Queens.

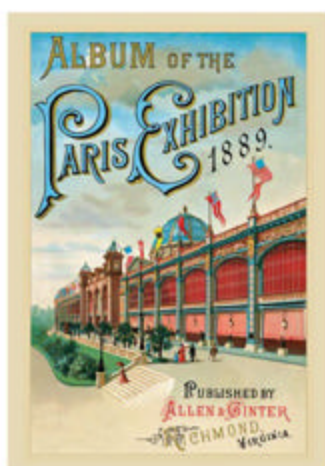
It Happened at the
WORLD'S FAIR

Five lasting legacies of global expos, from Ford Mustangs
to Ferris wheels, Dr. Pepper to Pabst Blue Ribbon, and more

BY KEVIN KUNITAKE AND HANNAH SHEINBERG

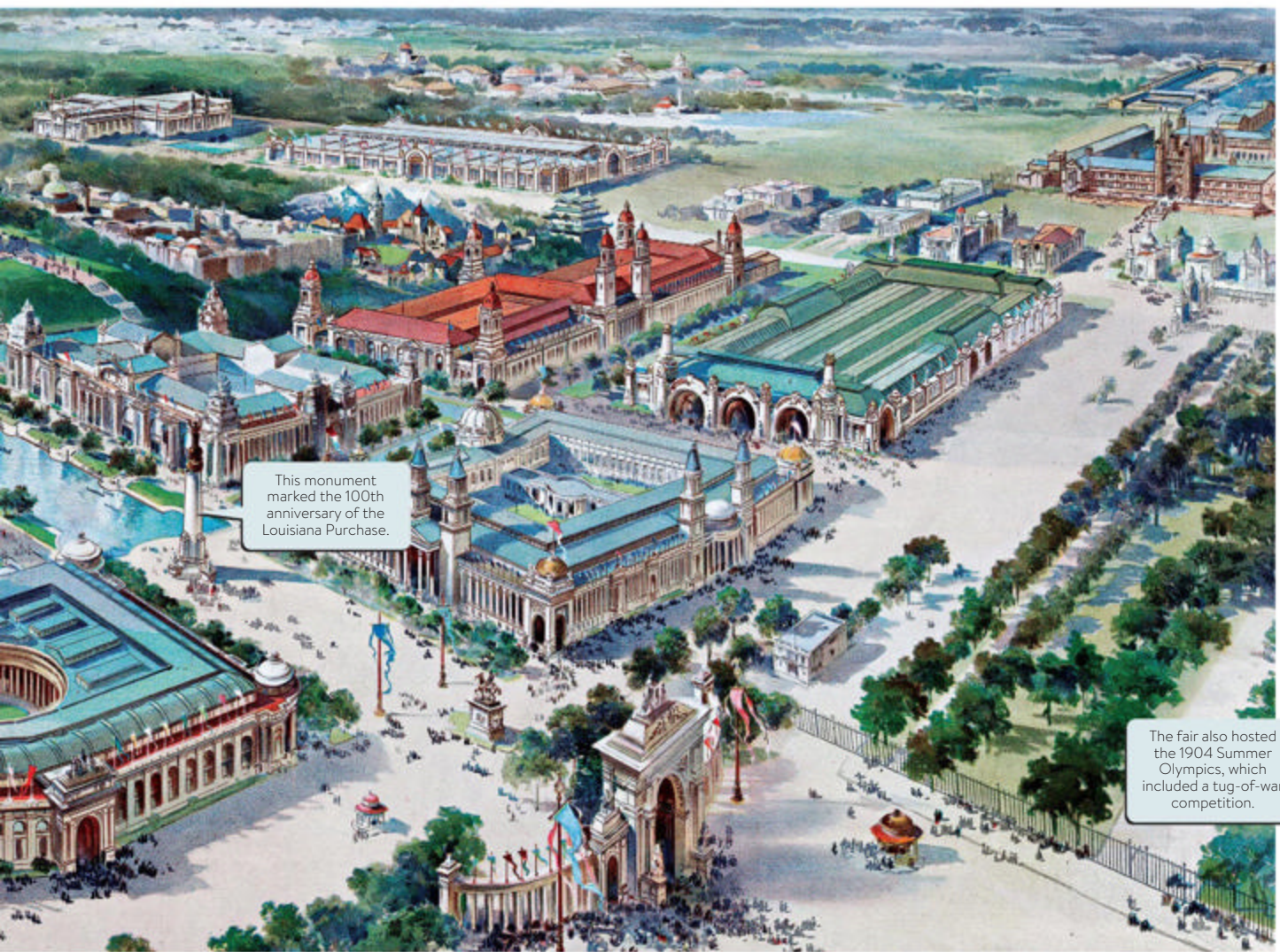


AN ILLUSTRATED BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE ST. LOUIS WORLD'S FAIR (1904)



BOOK COVER FROM PARIS EXPO (1889)

LOOKING OUT FROM the top of a Ferris wheel, blowing a Juicy Fruit bubble, making a video call—it all first happened at a world's fair. Starting with London's Great Exhibition in 1851, these international expos continue to expose millions to innovations, global customs, and grand architecture. Their influence permeates popular culture: Walt Disney modeled Epcot Center on what he saw at the 1964 New York World's Fair; Montreal named its baseball team the Expos after hosting in 1967; St. Louis's 1904 fair included the first Olympics on U.S. soil. And this year, from May to October, Milan, Italy, will host a food-focused and sustainably minded showcase. Here's a look back at what the fairs brought us and what Expo Milano 2015 has to live up to.



MAJORETTES IN MONTREAL (1967)



A BRUSSELS FASHION SHOW (1958)

1

Travel Goes Mainstream

Fairs changed what it means to be a tourist. The Philadelphia 1876 World's Fair, the second in the U.S., attracted 10 million—equivalent to about 20 percent of the country's population at the time. Sentimental souvenirs, towering landmarks, and just plain curiosity prompted many to travel beyond their comfort zones for the first time. In return, cities made strong first impressions by cleaning up and beautifying their urban landscapes.



2

Continents Move Closer

Fairs often had displays of groups from around the globe, dressed in traditional garb or performing customary ceremonies, in the name of cultural exchange. While most of these exhibits perpetuated exoticism and stereotypes, it was the first time many could stand eye-to-eye with someone from another part of the world.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: APACHE LEADER GERONIMO WITH HIS NIECES (1904); AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN (1900); FILIPINO TRIBESMAN (1904); ITALIAN OLYMPIAN (1900); OGLALA LAKOTA CHIEF RED CLOUD (1901); JAVANESE GROUP (1889); MEXICAN WOMAN (1964); SHARPSHOOTER ANNIE OAKLEY (1893)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: H.H. CLARKE/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION, NIDAX PICTURE LIBRARY/ALAMY, MISSOURI HISTORY MUSEUM, ST. LOUIS, POPPERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES, C.D. ARNOLD/CORBIS, ND/ROGER VIOLETTE/GETTY IMAGES, POPPERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES

3

Technology Takes the Stage

Imagine sitting in one of the first Ford Mustang convertibles as part of an early Walt Disney-designed ride, a tour through time with animatronic dinosaurs, mammoths, and cavemen; this was the Ford Magic Skyway, one of the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair's most popular attractions and an epic moment in the history of technology. Other impressive fair debuts include the telephone (1876), zippers (1893), diesel engines (1900), IMAX films (1967), and touch screens (1982). Known as a platform for invention, the expos introduced the next big thing, before it was even a thing.



AT&T PICTURE PHONE AT THE 1964 FAIR



The soup company won its gold medal at the 1900 fair in Paris.

AN ORIGINAL CAMPBELL'S CAN FROM 1895

4

Food Becomes Fun

Now standard snacky staples such as waffle cones, hot dogs, hamburgers, peanut butter, iced tea, cotton candy, and Cherry Coke all entered the world stage through these junk food smorgasbords. Not everything edible was kid-friendly, though—Jack Daniel's whiskey won its signature Gold Medal at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis.

WHO KNEW?

Golden nuggets from fairs past

LONDON 1851

First official World's Fair; attendance was equal to one-third of Britain's population.



PARIS 1889

Built for the Exposition Universelle, the Eiffel Tower was initially considered an eyesore before it reached bucket list status.



1910

CHICAGO 1893

Hosted the first Ferris wheel and the gruesome *Devil in the White City* murders

SEATTLE 1909

A one-month-old orphan boy, named Ernest, was raffled away as a prize during the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition.



NEW YORK 1939-40

FDR's televised opening speech was society's introduction to TV.



VANCOUVER 1986

Princess Diana fainted, blaming it on exhaustion. Later, it was revealed that she had an eating disorder.



KNOXVILLE 1982

Officials expected a \$5 million profit, but made only \$57.

1850

1870

1890

1930

1950

1970

1990

2010



TOWER OF THE SUN, OSAKA, JAPAN (1970)



ATOMIUM, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM (1958)



CHINA PAVILION, SHANGHAI, CHINA (2010)

5

Form Beats Function

Most expo buildings are temporary, but there are a few landmarks that are still standing. Designed for the 1962 Seattle World's Fair, the Space Needle recently received a fresh coat of its original "Galaxy Gold" paint to celebrate its 50th birthday.

And if you weren't one of the 73 million at Shanghai's 2010 Expo—the most attended to date—visit the leftover Forbidden City-style China Pavilion (above), now converted into Asia's largest art museum.

NEXT UP

Milan 2015

Focused on the future of all things edible, Expo Milano 2015 features more than 140 countries tackling questions related to its "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life" theme. Expect to see international nutrition innovations, green architecture, and our Italian counterpart—*National Geographic Touring*.

SEATTLE'S
SPACE NEEDLE

Six fearless base jumpers have parachuted off the top of the structure.

The paint color of the spire's legs kept with the futuristic theme: "Astronaut White."

The original manager of the Needle had acrophobia, or a fear of heights.

2014 WINNER

A STORM CLOUD
IN COLORADO,
CAPTURED BY
MARKO KOROŠEC

It's Powerful

National Geographic Traveler's Annual Photo Contest

FIRST PRIZE: 8-day National Geographic Photo Expedition: Costa Rica and the Panama Canal with airfare* for 2 ngexpeditions.com/phototrips

SECOND PRIZE: 6-day National Geographic Photo Expedition: Winter Wildlife in Yellowstone for 2 ngexpeditions.com/phototrips

THIRD PRIZE: 6-day cruise from Schooner American Eagle and Heritage for 2 schoonerheritage.com

7 MERIT PRIZES: National Geographic Masters of Photography course on DVD; \$200 gift certificate to B&H Photo. **All Winners:** 1-year subscription to *National Geographic Traveler*; winning images will be published in *National Geographic Traveler* and at natgeo.com/travel



Submit entries at
[natgeo.com/
travelerphotocontest](http://natgeo.com/travelerphotocontest)

Entry fee: \$15

Deadline
June 30, 2015
12 p.m. EDT

Win Big
**Enter
NOW!**



TRAVELER



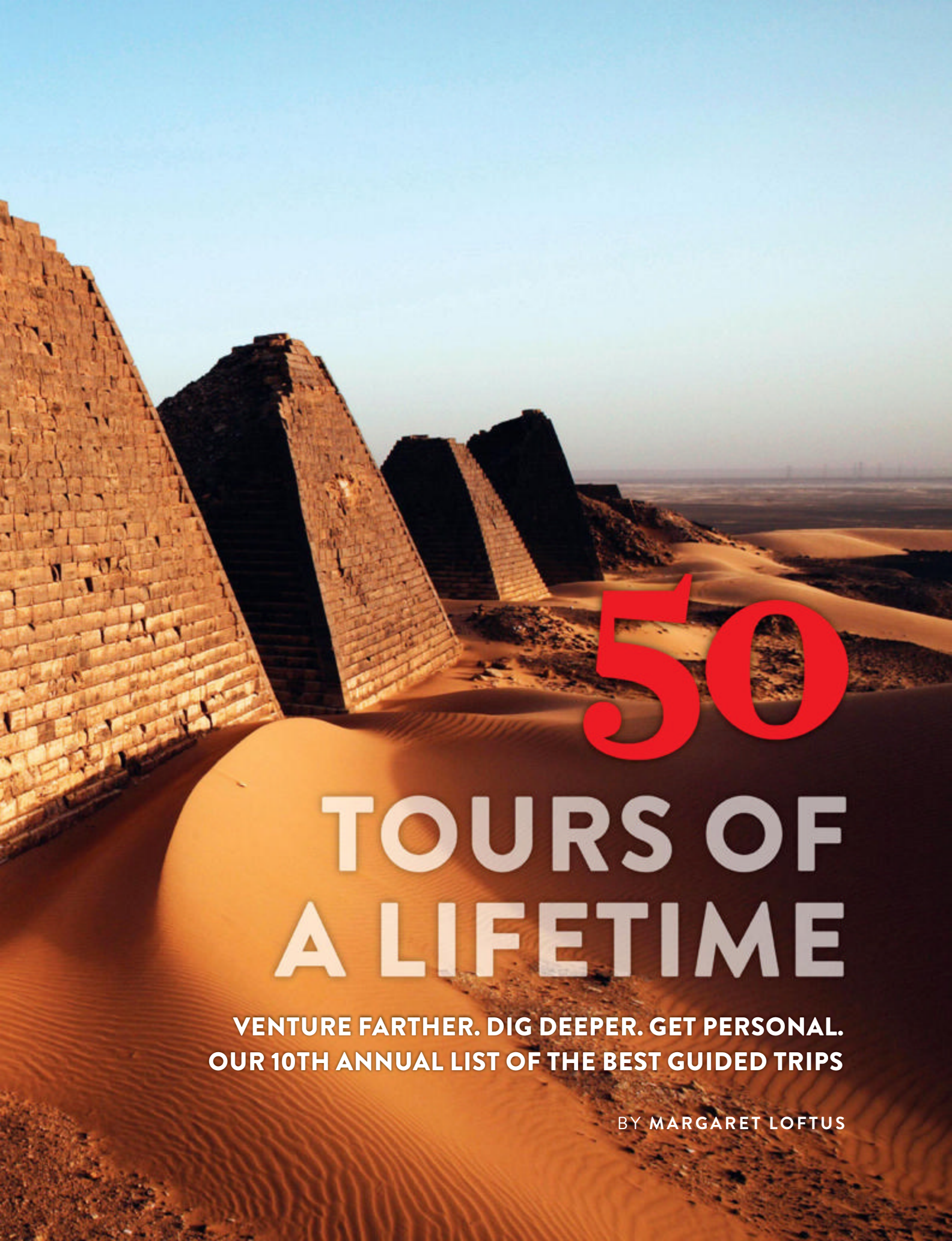
EXPEDITIONS



For Official Rules, complete entry details, and prize descriptions, visit www.natgeo.com/travelerphotocontest. To enter, visit www.natgeo.com/travelerphotocontest, upload your photograph, and submit along with your fee in accordance with the instructions. Fee is U.S. \$15. INTERNET ACCESS REQUIRED. Contest is open only to individuals who have reached the age of majority in their jurisdiction of residence at the time of entry and who do NOT reside in Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, or Syria. Employees of National Geographic Society and related parties are not eligible. CONTEST IS VOID IN CUBA, IRAN, NORTH KOREA, SUDAN, SYRIA, AND WHERE PROHIBITED. Entries must be received by June 30, 2015, at 12:00 p.m. U.S. EDT. There is no limit on the number of entries per person. Sponsor: National Geographic Society, 1145 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. *See terms and conditions in official contest rules.



Keepers of ancient secrets, pyramids built two millennia ago ring Meroë, the onetime capital of Sudan's fabled Kush kingdom.



50 TOURS OF A LIFETIME

**VENTURE FARTHER. DIG DEEPER. GET PERSONAL.
OUR 10TH ANNUAL LIST OF THE BEST GUIDED TRIPS**

BY MARGARET LOFTUS



Kayakers explore clear Adriatic waters edging Dubrovnik, one of seven World Heritage sites in Croatia.

SAILING A DHOW around a Mozambique archipelago, riding a dogsled in Greenland, sampling wine fermented in clay vessels in the Republic of Georgia—these are far from everyday experiences. With a few clicks of your cursor, however, they're yours to enjoy. In the ten years we've curated our annual roundup of the best guided trips, sustainable tours that reflect the National Geographic Society's mission to inspire, illuminate, and teach have proliferated. Not long ago, for example, travelers interested in small-group tours to India settled for a handful of well-trod itineraries; today, choices run from seeing antiquities in Gujarat to trekking with Himalayan yak herders. Driving much of this growth: increasingly sophisticated travelers keen on customized trips and just enough adventure. Eager to join them? Start here. —*The Editors*



Africa

NAMIBIA

Pedal Power

Cycling along the Swakop River and in Skeleton Coast National Park are just two options on this Namib biking itinerary. Highlights include seeing the sun rise over the Sossusvlei sand dunes and visiting a Himba village. *H&I Adventures: "Mountain Biking*

Safari in Namibia," 12 days; \$3,910 (plus \$544 for bike rental); www.mountainbikeworldwide.com

MALAWI

Giving Forward

Spend five days in the village of Njobvu, where you'll help build, farm, and teach. You'll stay in thatch-roofed huts and dine on traditional food in this sustainable community. A visit to adjacent Liwonde National

Park features sightings of elephants, rhinos, and hippos. *Elevate Destinations: "Malawi Service and Safari," 9 days; \$2,500; elevatedestinations.com*

● ● ● ● ●

SUDAN

The Other Pyramids

Although this nation just south of Egypt remains off most travelers' radar, word is spreading about Sudan's rich

cultural patrimony, including temples, painted tombs, and more pyramids than Egypt. *Mountain Travel Sobek: "Ancient Kingdoms of Sudan," 12 days; from \$4,995; www.mtsobek.com* ●

TANZANIA

Stalking in the Serengeti

Serengeti National Park has granted veteran outfitter Mark Thornton Safaris permission to lead walking safaris in its

interior. The result: this multi-day trek through backcountry known for its savanna—and sightings of big cats. Digs are walk-in tents furnished with comfy cots. *Mark Thornton Safaris: “The Great Serengeti Traverse,” 11 days; \$9,990; www.thorntonsafaris.com* ●●

KENYA, TANZANIA

Go for the Joe

Most visitors to Africa come to see animals, but this look at Kenya and Tanzania is through the filter of coffee, which has helped shape the modern history of both lands. Taste fair-trade roasts, meet the crew at Kenya’s Nyeri Coffee Estate, and bed down at local lodges, including Arusha Coffee Lodge. Between tastings, take game drives in nearby parks to spot leopards and lions. *Micato Safaris: “Sourcing the Perfect Cup: A Coffee Connoisseur’s Tour,” 11 days; \$19,550; www.micato.com* ●●

ZAMBIA

This Park Is Made for Walks

Explore a remote region of South Luangwa National Park, which is considered one of Africa’s great wildlife sanctuaries, as you look for animals—hippos, buffalo, elephants, lions—on foot with this seasoned operator. *Robin Pope Safaris: “Mobile Walking Safari,” 8 days; \$4,345; www.robinpopesafaris.net*

MOZAMBIQUE

Wild Archipelago

Discover the subtropical Quirimbas Archipelago aboard a dhow, snorkeling pristine reefs and lounging on white-sand beaches. Retire to mobile eco-camps on uninhabited islands to sleep under starry skies. Wind up with a visit to the once prosperous trading center of Ibo Island, with its ancient forts and pirate lore. *CW Safaris: “Ibo Island Dhow Safari,” 8 days; \$3,498; www.countrywalkers.com* ●●

ALGERIA

Hidden North Africa

Venture into a country largely untouched by tourism, from the white-washed capital of Algiers—with its ancient Casbah and fanciful Ottoman architecture—to the World Heritage site of Djemila, one of the best preserved Roman sites in North Africa, to the oases and sculpted sandscapes of the Sahara. *Wild Frontiers: “Algeria Colours,” 9 days; \$3,032; www.wildfrontierstravel.com* ●

SOUTH AFRICA

Outward Bound

With dozens of mountain ranges and hundreds of miles of coastline, South Africa is an outdoor enthusiast’s dream. This adventure weaves in hikes in the Drakensberg Mountains, kayaking to a penguin colony, and a safari in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve. *REI Adventures: “South Africa Ultimate Adventure & Safari,” 11 days; from \$7,199 for members; www.rei.com/adventures*

Asia

CHINA, MYANMAR

Far East Sampler

Help mahouts care for their elephants at a conservation project in Myanmar’s Kalaw forest, mountain bike through Pao villages, and kayak Inle Lake, stopping to visit with Shan people as you tour a place few know. End in China’s scenic province of Yunnan. *Global Basecamps: “Myanmar & Southern China: Places*





Blue skies enhance eye-popping costumes at Peru's Quyllur Rit'i festival, outside Cusco.

Unexplored," 15 days; from \$4,264; www.globalbasecamps.com ●●

IRAN

Persian Odyssey

An ambitious itinerary spans millennia and a wide swath of the land of the Peacock Throne, from ancient palaces of the Achaemenid kings at Persepolis to the Zoroastrian Fire Temple in Yazd, where fire has been burning for 1,500 years. Tour operator founder Will Weber will join the

September departure. *Journeys International*: "Persia Past and Present," 15 days; \$5,375; www.journeysinternational.com ●

INDIA

Snow Leopard Trek

Join ecologists, shepherds, and yak herders on a 12-day trek in the Kumaon Himalaya, where an estimated 10 percent of the world's endangered snow leopards roam. Each participant is asked to raise a minimum of \$500 for an initiative to

mitigate conflict between snow leopards and humans, such as compensation for families who lose sheep to the cats. *Hidden Places*: "Snow Leopards—Snow Mountains Fundraising Trek," 17 days; from \$3,250 (excludes fundraising); hiddenplaces.net ●●●

INDIA

Land of Legends

Who knew Gujarat is the one place lions still exist in their natural habitat outside Africa? This corner of South Asia

turns out to be full of surprises, including vestiges of one of the world's oldest civilizations and parks that are home to hyenas, wolves, Asiatic lions, and more. *Immersion Journeys*: "Gujarat: The Land of Legends, Culture & Crafts," 12 days; \$5,295; www.immersionjourneys.com ●

INDONESIA

Dives and Dragons

Snorkel among manta rays and such exotic species as clown blennies and yellow-ribbon sweetlips in the translucent waters of Komodo National Park. Home is a 98-foot-long wooden schooner, complete with a small team of marine biologists and guides, who give talks on the park's diversity. A highlight: close-up sightings of Komodo dragons. *Wilderness Travel*: "Komodo Snorkeling Expedition," 11 days; from \$5,595; www.wildernesstravel.com ●

JAPAN

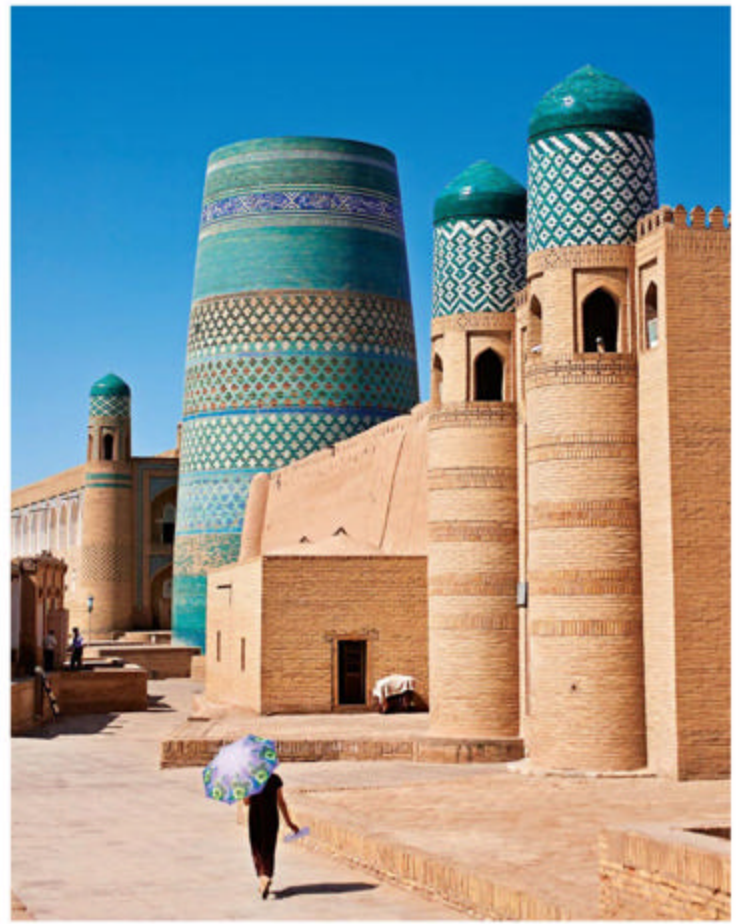
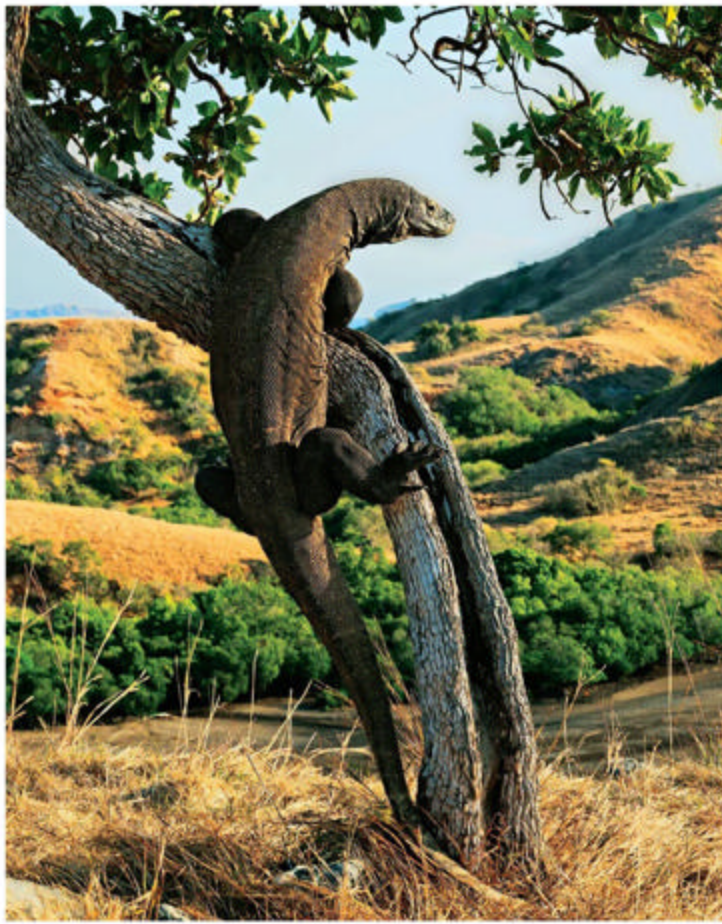
The Zen of Gardens

Cycle country roads from Kanazawa—site of Kenrokuen, one of Japan's great gardens—north to the Noto Peninsula. Along the way, visit the Sojiji Temple and gardens, scout for lacquerware at Wajima's morning market, and relax in the healing hot springs of Wakura Onsen. Bookended by stays in Kyoto and Tokyo. *Explore!*: "Kyoto and Beyond by Bike," 13 days; from \$5,440; www.exploreworldwide.com

JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA

Culture Cruise

Ply the coastal waters of Kyushu and Honshu, two of Japan's four main islands, aboard the 264-passenger *L'Austral*. The itinerary packs in cultural excursions, from a visit to Naoshima island—known for its contemporary art museums, two designed by Osaka-born architect Tadao Ando—to a look at how *shoju*, sake's stronger cousin, is made, at a distillery in Kagoshima.



Clockwise from top left: A Komodo dragon, Earth's largest lizard species, climbs a tree in Indonesia's Komodo National Park. Turquoise-tiled minarets add color to the caravan town of Khiva, Uzbekistan, a star attraction along the old Silk Road. Rowers manning a ceremonial vessel rehearse for the Thai Royal Barge Procession along Bangkok's Chao Phraya River.



Tauck: “Cruising the Land of the Rising Sun,” 14 days; \$10,990; www.tauck.com ●

LAOS

Travel With Soul

Hiking, zip-lining, and other activities pair with opportunities to engage with service organizations, such as Brother Mouse, a group that provides books to rural area schools. Noteworthy: three days at the Gibbon Experience project. *Myths and Mountains: “Laos With a Heart,”* 15 days; from \$4,695; mythsandmountains.com ●●

RUSSIA

Realm of Polar Bears

Shrinking summer sea ice in the Chukchi Sea between Russia and Alaska is lifting the so-called Ice Curtain, allowing passage to small expedition ships—and a glimpse of the remote wilderness of northeastern Siberia. Stops include the Russian island of Wrangel, known for polar bears, gray whales, Pacific walrus, and snowy owls. *Heritage Expeditions: “Wrangel Island: Across the Top of the World,”* 15 days; from \$11,200; heritage-expeditions.com

TURKEY TO THAILAND

Silk Road 2.0

The latest take on the old Silk Route, this trip departs from Istanbul and proceeds by ferry, 4x4, boat, and truck through Central Asia to Bangkok, with plenty of time to take in such sights as Turkmenistan’s flaming Darvaza Gas Crater. *Dragoman: “Istanbul-Bangkok via Burma,”* 127 days; \$17,810; www.dragoman.com ●●

VIETNAM

Window Onto Tradition

Relive the days of ancient trading ports in Hoi An’s Old Town; float in a bamboo-woven coracle boat used by fishermen; and overnight in the recently discovered Hang En Cave, one of the world’s largest grottoes.

Audley Travel: “Vietnam’s UNESCO Discovery,” 16 days; from \$3,895 (most meals extra); www.audleytravel.com ●●●

Oceania & Pacific Islands

AUSTRALIA

Oz, Round Two

Been to Sydney, Uluru, and the Great Barrier Reef? This alternate down-under itinerary highlights the vast Kimberley region and Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia, where you’ll fly over the Bungle Bungle Range and swim with whale sharks. *EverGreen Escapes International: “The ‘Other’ Sydney, Rock, & Reef,”* 18 days; from \$12,750 including flights in Australia; www.evergreenescapesintl.com ●●

NEW ZEALAND

Sea to Sky

An action-packed program draws thrill seekers to New Zealand’s South Island. First stop: the fishing town of Kaikoura, to shake off jet lag (try a swim among fur seals). Then head out on a three-day hike of the Angelus Circuit, in Nelson Lakes National Park. Recuperate at Braemar Station, a high-country sheep ranch in the shadow of Aoraki/Mount Cook. *Active Adventures New Zealand: “Ultimate South Island Adventure ‘Rimu,’”* 14 days; \$4,699; activeadventures.com

FIJI

Polynesian Passage

Forget Bora Bora—here’s a chance to live out a Robinson Crusoe fantasy when you paddle the northernmost Yasawa islands, west of the Fiji Islands in the Pacific Ocean, spending two nights in a Fijian village and two on an uninhabited island. *Southern Sea Ventures: “Fiji Sea Kayak Adventure,”* 8 days; \$1,752; www.southernseaventures.com ●

Temple in Segesta, Sicily



TRAVEL WITH US

5 STANDOUT NAT GEO TRIPS

ITALY

Storied Stones Discover some of Italy’s most ancient landscapes and ruins on this journey from Naples through Sicily. You’ll visit eight World Heritage sites, including Pompeii and Agrigento, and hike the rims of still active Vesuvius and Etna volcanoes. *“Archaeological Wonders of Southern Italy and Sicily,”* 10 days; \$6,195

INDIA

Making Photo Magic Sunrise at the Taj Mahal, tigers and peacocks in Ranthambore National Park, sinuous sand dunes in the Thar Desert—India teems with photo opportunities. Sharpen your shooting skills on this train journey, which includes five days aboard the *Palace on Wheels*. *“India by Rail Photo Expedition,”* 13 days; \$11,595

FIJI, TONGA, NIUE, COOK ISLANDS

Pacific Cruise Board the *National Geographic Orion*, and you soon will find yourself touring a vanilla plantation on Tonga, spotting Fiji woodswallows and other endemic birds on the “Garden Island” of Taveuni, and snorkeling Beveridge Reef, a submerged atoll. *“Fiji to Cook Islands: Polynesian Discovery,”* 14 days; from \$10,870

WORLDWIDE

Deep Travel Join National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Spencer Wells, head of the Genographic Project, on a private jet expedition to the lands of fabled ancient civilizations, from nomadic Mongolia to regal Sri Lanka. *“The Human Journey: Tracing Legendary Peoples & Sacred Places,”* 24 days; \$67,950, 2016 only

AUSTRALIA

Family Fling Explore Earth’s oldest landmass on a trip specially packaged for families; highlights include a visit to Australia’s largest butterfly sanctuary and a star-gazing dinner. *“Australia Family Adventure,”* 12 days; \$7,990

TOURS DETAILS: www.nationalgeographicexpeditions.com

Europe

CROATIA

Coastal Idyll

Hike rocky bluffs and kayak coves between wine tastings and talks on local history with this introduction to Dalmatia's coast and islands. High point: dinner at the home of a local artist. *Boundless Journeys: "Dalmatian Coast Hiking & Kayaking,"* 8 days; \$4,995; www.boundlessjourneys.com •

NETHERLANDS, BELGIUM

Touring in Slow Mo'

The canals and flat terrain of the Low Countries offer ideal conditions for travel by barge and bike. As your barge floats from Amsterdam to Bruges, guides lead bike rides filled with cultural moments, such as visiting a family for homemade Dutch *wafels*. *VBT Bicycling and Walking Vacations: "Holland and Belgium Bike & Barge Amsterdam,"* 12 days; \$4,195 (includes airfare); www.vbt.com

HUNGARY, AUSTRIA, CZECH REPUBLIC

Through the Grapevine

Sip Grüner Veltliner wine in Austria's Wachau Valley as you tour a vineyard with Heidi Shröck, one of a few female vintners, on a wine-focused trip in central Europe. Bonus: a VIP visit to Strahov Monastery, near Prague. *Exeter International: "A Wine Lovers Journey Through Budapest, Vienna, and Prague,"* 10 days; \$8,025; www.exeterinternational.com •

ITALY

Two-Wheel Touring

Geared to cyclists who prefer sightseeing to speed, this new slow-travel trip meanders from Verona to Bassano del Grappa, in the region of Trentino-Alto Adige (or Südtirol), stopping

for a boat ride on Lake Garda and sips of local grappa. *ExperiencePlus!: "Bike Paths of Lake Garda and Veneto—Sightseer Tour,"* 8 days; \$3,650; www.experienceplus.com •

FRANCE

Wild Corsica

Trek a segment of the Grand Randonnée 20, a legendary long-distance trail that runs north-south along Corsica's granite spine. En route, reconnoiter coves and sea caves in the Gulf of Porto on a hiking/kayaking expedition fueled by local charcuterie, sheep-milk cheeses, and wine. The September departure will be led by outfitter co-owner Peter Grubb. *ROW Sea Kayak Adventures: "Compelling Corsica—Sea Kayaking and Mountain Hiking,"* 9 days; \$3,490; www.seakayakadventures.com •

PORTUGAL

Creature Feature

Kids and grown-ups alike partner with donkeys to walk picturesque paths in rural northeastern Portugal. Come evening, children can help brush and feed the burros, then guide them into their stables. *KE Adventure Travel: "Blazing Saddles Family Adventure,"* 8 days; from \$1,420; www.keadventure.com ••

SCOTLAND

For the Birds

Can't tell a golden eagle from an osprey? Get a quick course in wildlife viewing during a week in the fauna-rich mountains of Cairngorms National Park. This lodge-based trip concentrates on how to identify bird species, from that golden eagle to a Slavonian grebe. *Speyside Wildlife: "Wildlife for Beginners,"* 8 days; \$1,015; www.speysidewildlife.co.uk •



ALEX ROBINSON/JAI/CORBIS

ON THE WEB

View a photo gallery of tour destinations featured in these pages at travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/tours.



A visitor skips down sand in Brazil's Lençóis Maranhenses National Park, a rare landscape of dunes and lagoons.

SWITZERLAND

Biking—With a Boost

From the vineyards of Lavaux to the peaks of Interlaken, glory in Alpine landscapes while astride two wheels—without breaking a sweat. The secret? E-bikes, which provide an electric boost when needed. *Butterfield & Robinson*: “Switzerland E-biking,” 6 days; \$6,995; www.butterfield.com •

SWEDEN

Wolves in Winter

Strap on snowshoes or cross-country skis and head into the taiga forest of central Sweden with naturalist Anders Stahl, who will teach you how to interpret wolf tracks and howls (are many wolves in the pack, are they hunting?). Your base: the Green Hotel, on Lake Siljan, where staff honor the local heritage by wearing traditional dress. *Naturetrek*: “Wolf Tracking in Winter,” 5 days; \$1,585; www.naturetrek.co.uk

DENMARK

Mastering Arctic Ways

Enter the world of Greenland's Inuit people, whose way of life is being challenged by modern times. Each guest partners with an Inuit hunter, who helms a dogsled across the icy

expanses of Greenland's west coast, tracking wildlife—foxes, narwhals, polar bears—and uses such survival skills as building an igloo. Glamping on ice this isn't; most of your nights will be spent in basic canvas tents. *WANT Expeditions*: “Greenland Traditional Dogsled Expedition,” 9 days; \$6,749; www.wantexpeditions.com

REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

Holy Spirits

Monks at the ancient Alaverdi Monastery still ferment wine the way their order has for a millennium, in earthenware vessels buried in the ground. Taste the fruits of their labor on a culinary odyssey led by Max Johnson, the travel outfitter's founder, whose passion for this unsung corner of the planet is contagious. *Great Canadian Travel Company*: “Georgia's Food, Wine & Culture,” 10 days; \$3,280; greatcanadiantravel.com

HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA, POLAND

Trails Made for Walking

A series of ten-mile hikes on the trail system that traverses Slovakia's peaks and valleys takes you from the medieval mining town of Banská Štiavnica to the limestone

caves of Demänovská. The trip begins in the museum-filled town of Szentendre, Hungary, and ends in Poland's medieval city of Krakow. *Freewheeling Adventures*: “Budapest to Krakow Walk,” 8 days; \$3,365; \$2,275 self-guided; www.freewheeling.ca

North America

ALASKA

Conquering Kenai

This condensed grand tour of the “last frontier” has you circumnavigating Fox Island by kayak, scouting for puffins and sea lions on a fjord cruise along the rugged coastline, trekking Exit Glacier, and learning how to mush with the help of an Iditarod champ before setting off on a dogsled ride. *Alaska Heritage Tours*: “Best of Kenai Fjords National Park,” 5 days; \$1,933; www.alaskaheritagetours.com • •

COLORADO

Rockies High Route

Llamas do the heavy lifting by carrying your gear (if desired) as you hike the Vail to Aspen High Route in the Rockies, overnighting at three of 34 backcountry huts managed by the 10th Mountain Division Hut system. *Paragon Guides*: “Vail to Aspen Interconnect—Summer/Fall,” 5 days; \$2,125; www.paragonguides.com •

CANADA

Channeling Quebec

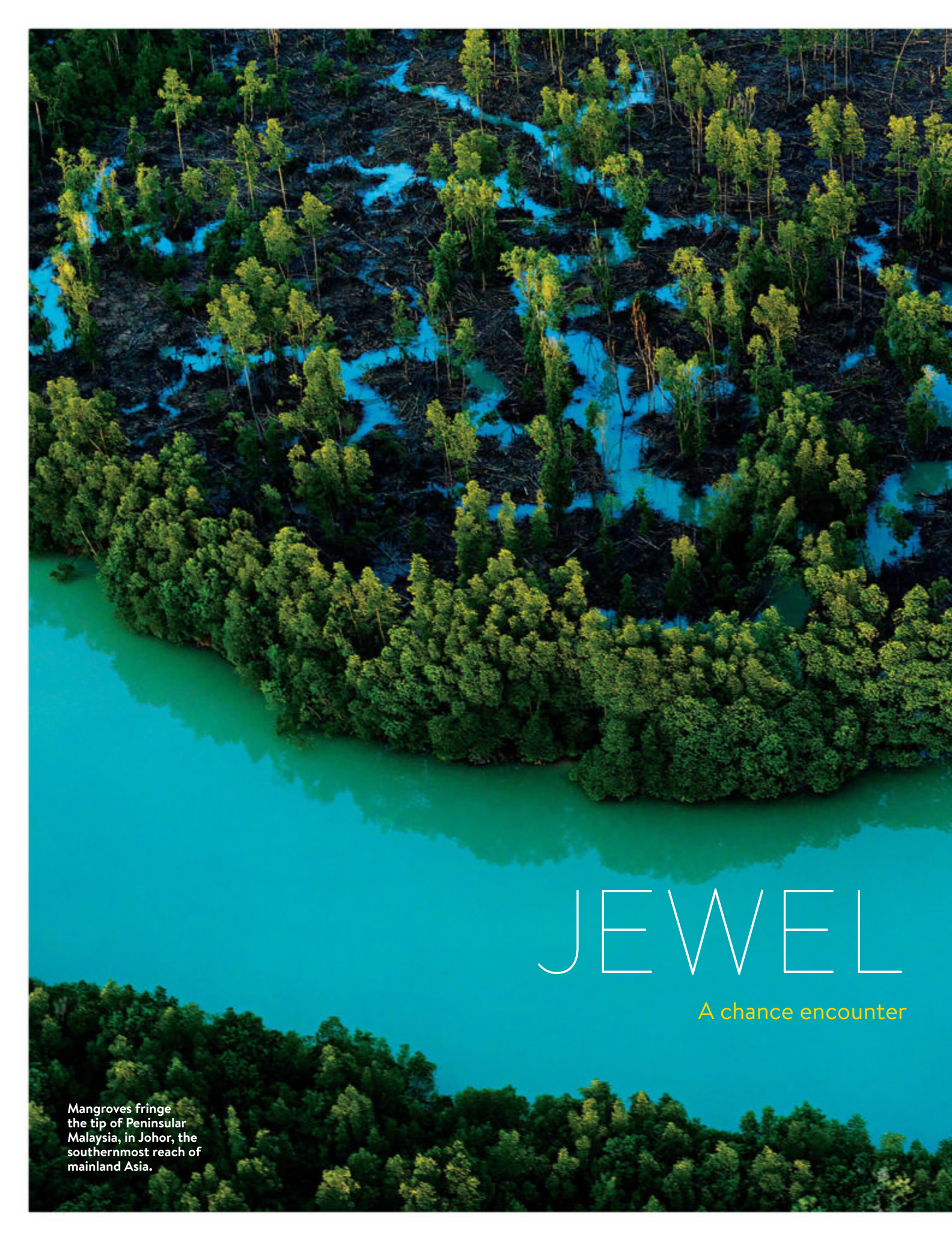
Settle onto the 198-passenger *Ocean Endeavor* for a trip along the St. Lawrence Seaway and Gulf, taking in history-filled Quebec. See whales in Saguenay Fjord National Park and tour lost-in-time islands St. Pierre and Miquelon. *Adventure Canada*: “Mighty Saint Lawrence,” 10 days; \$2,595–\$11,995; www.adventurecanada.com •

BIKE TRIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Ten years ago, most guided bike trips were geared to serious enthusiasts, the sort who think nothing of riding hard dawn to dusk. These days, just-for-fun cyclists have a menu of options: Eager to tap into a broader market, outfitters have dreamed up ways to go easier on our quads while offering more chances to experience local landscapes and cultures.

“We designed itineraries so that many routes are on biking paths,” says Maria Elena Price, co-owner of **Experience Plus** (opposite), which has rolled out a Sightseer series for bicycling at a relaxed pace. “We also offer plenty of optional activities that don't involve cycling.” **VBT Bicycling and Walking Vacations** expanded its offerings to include a Holland Bike & Barge trip (opposite), with no more than four hours of biking daily on mostly flat terrain. And **Butterfield & Robinson** (above) is among the outfitters introducing electric bikes, which provide a boost of power for climbs—saving your quad energies for non-bike sights.

Continued on page 80

An aerial photograph of a mangrove forest. The top half of the image shows a dense forest of tall, thin trees with green foliage, interspersed with dark, winding channels of water. The bottom half of the image is dominated by a large, calm body of water that reflects the sky, which has a light blue tint. The water's surface is smooth, creating a clear reflection of the forest above.

JEWEL

A chance encounter

Mangroves fringe
the tip of Peninsular
Malaysia, in Johor, the
southernmost reach of
mainland Asia.

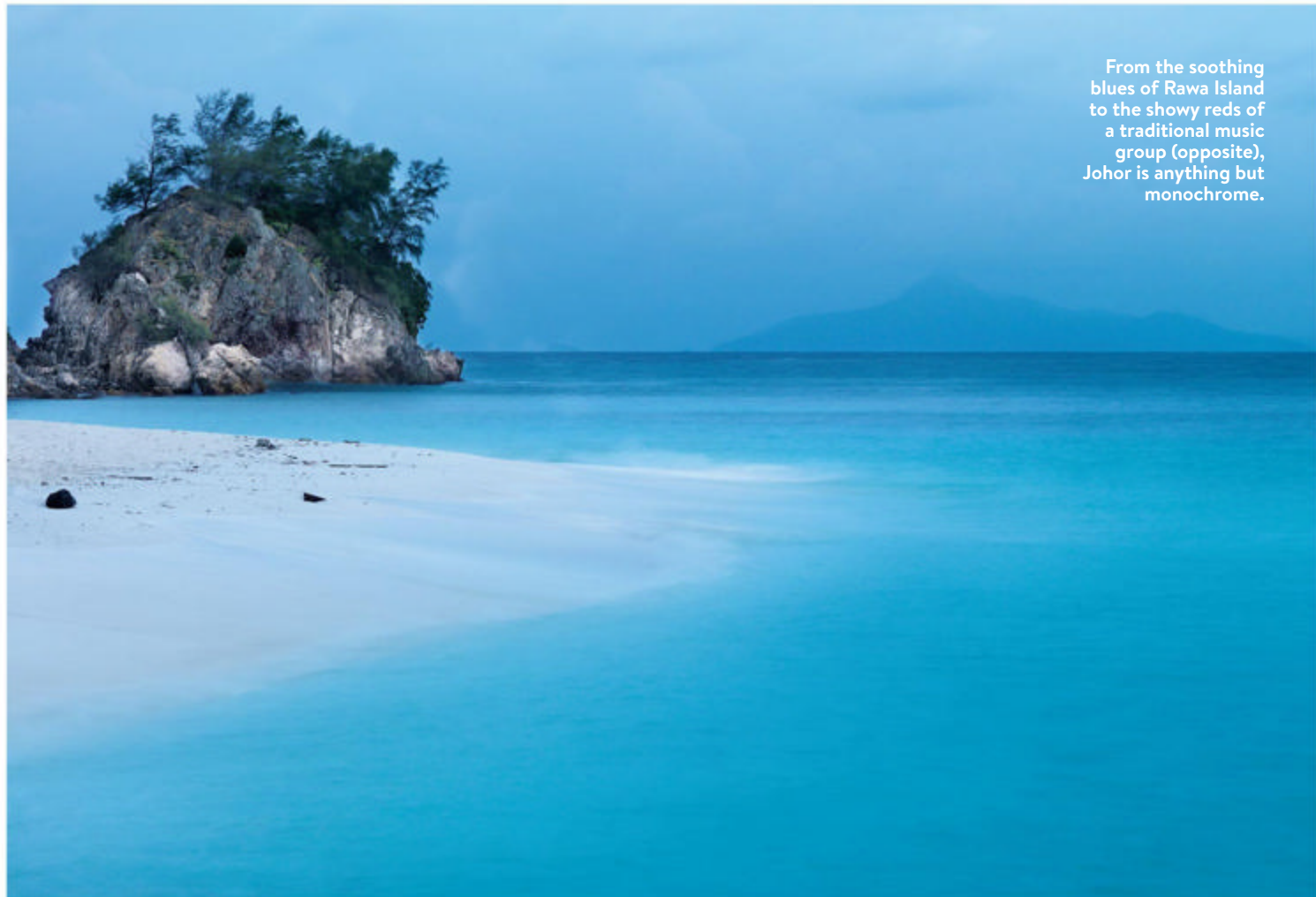


OF MALAYSIA

on a train sparks a journey into the country's most colorful state

BY JOHN KRICH

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUSTIN GUARIGLIA



From the soothing blues of Rawa Island to the showy reds of a traditional music group (opposite), Johor is anything but monochrome.

IT ALL STARTED

with an invitation to a palace. And now I'm on a trip to the "End of the Earth."

That's what locals once called Tanjung Piai, a coastal nub of mangroves in Johor, Malaysia, that marks the lowest reaches of the lengthy Malay Peninsula and the southernmost point of mainland Asia. The spot is now a postage stamp-size national park with a circuit of boardwalks raised above eerily gnarled roots.

Here horseshoe and fiddler crabs share a mud bath, kingfishers dive into the waters to spear fish, and carved wooden signs convey maxims, in English, such as "Live happily with wilderness!" and "He who conquers his own heart, conquers the world!"

I conquer the equatorial heat to emerge, not quite wilted, from the forest onto the shore of the choppy, green Strait of Malacca, its horizon lined with long-distance oil tankers. A rather rusted globe symbolically marks land's end. Yet it's taken me only a little over an hour after exiting Singapore customs to get here.

Separated from its globalized island neighbor by a mere half-mile causeway, Johor is the second largest and most varied of the 11 states that make up Peninsular Malaysia, a crossroads realm crammed with both ecological and ethnic diversity. Fittingly named by Arab traders after their word for "jewel," this little-hyped destination encompasses Robinson Crusoe-like island havens, barely trampled rain forests, and aboriginal refuges. And though it does import theme parks (hello, Hello Kitty Town), Johor, seat of the ancient Johor-Riau empire, remains fiercely proud of its sweeping history and still powerful sultan: a Magic Kingdom, for real.

I might never have discovered the place or its royal provenance if not for one of those serendipitous travel encounters.



Eight years back, I was approached in a train compartment in India by a charming woman in a flowing gown, whose third son mistook me for a Discovery Channel host. Her husband, with elegant military bearing, explained they had come from Malaysia to visit their eldest son, who was serving in the Indian Army. I was about to tell them I lived in Malaysia as well, when a bodyguard in the next row ordered me to address them as “Your Royal Highnesses.” Not long after, I got an invitation to visit Raja Zarith Sofiah and Tunku Ibrahim Ismail, then the princess and prince of Johor. (In 2010, the prince inherited the title of sultan.)

I soon accepted and found myself being feted by the Oxford-educated princess with servant-borne luncheons of jackfruit curries in Johor’s Palace of the Rainbow Sands. “And the people think we eat a whole goat and lamb at one sitting!” the prince joked, nonetheless offering me an exclusive peek at stables of polo ponies and a collection of customized luxury cars and vintage limos, to go with the private jet and yacht, playthings of the world’s richest royals you’ve never heard of. For two years

running, I was also given a rare chance to tag along on Tunku Ibrahim’s annual *kembara*—a Malay word evoking any sort of journey, distant or near, spiritual or dutiful. During four ceremony-packed days each summer, this modern monarch took a motorcycle trip around his steamy kingdom. A mile-long caravan of fellow Harley bikers followed, rumbling through elephant crossings and descending on rural villages like a pack of charitable Hell’s Angels. (The sultan recently switched to private bus for his annual *kembara*.)

Now I’m attempting my own *kembara*—in a rented four-wheeler—to find the Johor that’s more unofficial.

Like most travelers, my point of entry is the sprawling state capital of Johor Bahru. With 200,000 Johoreans making the daily commute to wealthier Singapore, “J.B.,” as it’s colloquially called by all its denizens, has long suffered by comparison. Yet this is where I get a first taste of Johor’s genuine flavor. Navigating downtown’s warren of malls on a muggy June night, I meet one of many renegade Singaporeans who abandon their celebrated food courts to seek out less mass-produced fare

Mist veils Johor’s typically bountiful landscape (below). Opposite, clockwise from top left: roasted pig and red bean cakes displayed for a festival in the capital of Johor Bahru; young *bomo* (shaman) apprentices readying for the *kuda kepang*, a mystical horse trance dance; the edible custard-like interior of a durian; an Indian-Malaysian shopkeeper in Johor Bahru’s Old Town





across the border. Mild-mannered, middle-aged blogger Tony Boey, who calls himself “Johorkaki,” eagerly guides me down through an area called Meldrum Walk to back alleys lined with traditional hawkers. Retired from the Singapore civil service, he has been leading food tours since 2012.

Hopping between wheeled stands with undisguised glee, my guide insists I savor a Teochew oyster cake made with eggs, dark soy sauce, and tapioca flour; confetti-thin noodles in anchovy broth; and hyperfresh stingray grilled in banana leaf and slathered with fiery sambal sauce. “Can you top that?” Boey says, even as he leaps up for something else. “You haven’t been in Johor until you’ve had its not-to-miss dishes!” He presents me with a heaped pyramid of *biryani gam*, a lamb pilaf covered in a thin tent of omelet, then *Johor laksa*, a tamarind-tinged fish stew with spaghetti. “It’s said the great Sultan Abu Bakar created the dish himself, as he was always bringing back the best from Europe,” he explains. Feasts fit for a king come cheap here.

As mixed as the cuisine, downtown J.B. is a hot pot of peoples—even by multiethnic Malaysia’s standards. Buddhist, Sikh, and Hindu temples line a main street. An Old Town of moldering, pastel-colored buildings finds Chinese bun makers, grandly mustachioed Indian barbers, and Malay bohemian types peacefully coexisting. Locals may identify themselves as Bugi, Javanese, Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka, Tamil,

Keralan, and Yemeni; or as Sufi, Taoist, Buddhist, Confucian, animist, Christian, or Hindu.

Founded in 1855, the city burgeoned into a showplace for the Anglophile ambitions of the flamboyant Abu Bakar when he became the sultan in 1886. So an assembly of monuments more Victorian than Asian command bluffs overlooking the Johor Strait, built to impress. The gleaming white Sultan Abu Bakar State Mosque affords sunset views from its minarets (which were designed to look like Victorian clock towers), and glimpses of solitary worshippers in its vast spaces below. But I find Johor’s main palace, a gracefully colonial compound, closed for renovation (though it has since reopened).

“Everything has to be perfect for the coronation,” explains a court curator, reminding me that Sultan Ibrahim’s official installation, in the works for years, promises to be one of Asia’s most resplendent. (At press time, the sultan’s coronation was set for March 2015.)

Instead, he points me to a lesser known site for communing with Johor’s past. I get lost on winding roads before I come upon the royal graveyards, hidden behind one of J.B.’s forested hills. The resting places of recent rulers are marked by marble mausoleums, but the fluted headstones of the dynastic founders, etched in Arabic script, have a greater authority and beauty.

To delve into more history, I drive an hour and a half

A confection of Western and Moorish styles, the Sultan Ibrahim mosque was built in the “Royal City” of Muar in 1930. Its riverside grounds feature an antique sundial for determining prayer times and also provide an ideal spot for quiet conversations.



northeast to Johor Lama (“old Johor”). Up a thickly forested hill, I get to an A-framed museum that enjoys a panorama of the wide, sun-dappled Johor River. Constructed in 1540, the fort that once stood here lasted until the Portuguese destroyed it in 1587. Only a moss-covered square remains, like some giant discarded Lego piece.

THIS WHETS MY APPETITE for a drive up the rest of Johor’s east coast. The route along the way is brilliantly green but a kind of tropical trompe l’oeil: Palm oil plantations in endless rows of stunted, leafy trees create an unpeopled landscape both wild and ordered.

I arrive at Mersing, a quiet port town—full of backpacker inns—that serves as a departure point for boats to Johor’s six inhabited islands. But there are no ferries in sight. I negotiate privately with the owner of a small speedboat I hope is seaworthy. The boat bucks wildly at each wave in the South China Sea, making for a breathtaking hour-long cruise to the nearest isle, Rawa. Along the way, I ask to step onto tiny rocky islets that appear straight out of travel agency posters: white sand, transparent waters, a single drooping palm tree placed just so. Rawa, too, is one sweep of sand, where I jump from the dock with snorkel and mask to view colorful fish in the translucent waters. But this all seems too civilized, so I ask the boatman to drop me on an isolated stretch of Pulau Besar, where there is just a long beach and two sets of thatched chalets. Later I’m primed for more island-hopping, and with the far-flung Pulau Aur mainly for serious divers, I backtrack to take a chance on Pulau Tinggi.

Here I find my true Johorean idyll. The waters are robin’s-egg blue, a waterfall is right for plunging, and there’s even a fishing hamlet where the villagers greet me from porches, then run in proudly to show me their documents. “UN refugee!” they cry proudly. “Myanmar! Myanmar!” The owner of the Warung (“grocery”) Aminah shows off three daughters at sewing

machines inside, but bemoans, “They go to school in Mersing. After that, they never come back. The island way is dying.”

With nothing much to do but watch the sunset, locals and visitors alike perk up at the welcome sight of a wheelbarrow being rolled down the beach, fully loaded with huge, spiky grenades that turn out to be durians. (The name derives from the Malay word for “thorn.”) Based on the speed with which Johoreans beg for them to be cut open, I’d say this “king of fruits,” as it’s called throughout Asia, rivals the sultan in terms of sheer esteem. Never mind that the Singapore rail network

bans these sulfuric stink bombs. The durian is the symbol of this realm’s fecundity, a carb-loaded caramel that literally falls from the trees. Unable to resist the succulent, kidney-shaped pieces passed lovingly to me, and emboldened by hunger from the day’s swims, I finally get past the smell and get initiated into the cult. Before long, I can’t wait to break the next one open. I learn to wash them down, and wash hands, with water poured from the empty shells.

After returning to mainland J.B. for a change of clothes and a hot shower, I head out along Johor’s more settled west coast. Disdaining Malaysia’s main north-south highway, I stick to lovely two-laners, skirt-ing the sea or cloaked in tall palms. I meander through fishing villages dominated by simple turquoise-domed mosques, past fields of pineapple. Most of the village of Kukup—where tourists dine on crustaceans plucked fresh off a fleet of

trawlers—sits atop long piers, its houses, temples, and restaurants wreathed in sea mists and brine.

Still, no backwater can beat Muar, Johor’s northernmost city. Though this harbor was once coveted by the British, I’m not prepared for such an overdose of past grandeur. A huge mosque, half-Western and half-Moorish in style, guards the mouth of a wide muddy river, where boys dive for dwindling oysters and one creaky ferry carries tourists up and down. An antique clock tower and equally English customs house preside over a ramshackle quay that seems the perfect setting for some Conradian tale of colonizers losing their way in the swampy eternity of the Orient. I gravitate toward a single city block known throughout

Continued on page 81



In Johor Bahru, a vendor sells bundles of rambutan, a lychee-type fruit with a hairy (“rambut” in Malay) shell, native to Southeast Asia.

ON THE
IPAD

View a photo gallery of more images from Johor by contributing photographer Justin Guariglia.

Johor, Malaysia

JOHOR IS STILL a diamond in the rough: with some spots lacking in polish, but with riches worth digging for. It's possible to drive from the bottom to the top of the state in under three hours.

WHEN TO GO

At one degree of latitude above the Equator, Johor's main rainy season is in winter, with some rain nearly every day through summer as well. Summer months offer the best durian and other fruits, but Endau Rompin National Park will be more crowded. The park is closed November to March.

WHERE TO STAY

Like other regions of Malaysia, Johor lacks high-end hotels outside big cities. That said, few

lodgings cost more than \$70. Some of the better ones: **Thistle Johor Bahru** hotel, with grand views of the Johor Strait; **Puteri Pacific**, in Johor Bahru's city center; **Hotel Jen Puteri Harbour**, the newest in the state and next to the Legoland theme park in the rising southern Johor city of Nusajaya; the passable **Hotel Havanita**, in Mersing (though there's no Latin atmosphere or decent breakfast); and **Riverview Hotel** in Muar. **Rawa Island Resort** off the east coast



of Johor is the posh way to do the islands.

WHERE TO EAT

Enjoy Johor cuisine best at hawker stalls, such as those in Johor Bahru's Meldrum Walk area. Ubiquitous Mamak stalls offer spicy mutton stew with rice. Indian corner joints feature flaky, grilled roti *canai*.

In Johor Bahru's Old Town, **Hiap Joo** bakery pulls a dozen kinds of stuffed buns hot from a wood-burning oven, while the facing **Kedai Kopi Kin Wah** draws morning crowds for its authentic breakfast, which includes *kaya* toast (bread with a coconut and egg spread). The menu at the modest **Myra Bistro**, in the M Suites Hotel, lists some hard-to-find Johorean specialties.

On the road, Kukup's

fish restaurants seem dingy but serve shrimp straight from the sea. Outside Kluang, **Zenxin Organic Park** whips up dragon fruit shakes and platters of steamed veggies from its farm.

WHAT TO READ

Virginia Matheson Hooker provides **A Short History of Malaysia**, while scholar Farish A. Noor sets out an alternative view of Malaysian history in

What Your Teacher Didn't Tell You. Preeta Samarasan's novel **Evening Is the Whole Day** vividly captures modern-day Malaysia's diversity.

ATLAS



With nine hereditary rulers, Malaysia has more sultans than any other country.

Malaysia accounts for 44 percent of international exports of palm oil.

On the outskirts of Johor Bahru, the Hindu temple Arulmigu Sri Rajakaliamman has an interior covered almost entirely in glass mosaics.

Durian strudel



LOCAL FLAVOR

MAD ABOUT DURIAN

In high summer in Johor, impromptu roadside stands appear, where fans gobble down durian nearly as quickly as flatbed trucks unload them. The odoriferous fruit comes in varieties with nicknames such as "Gajah" (Elephant), "Rolex," and "X.O." and is made into buns, ice cream, and strudel (above). "The best ones are like butterscotch, with a liquor aftertaste," says one enthusiast. Its flesh is considered an aphrodisiac.



WORLD LEGACY AWARDS

2015

A RESORT TURNING TRASH INTO FUEL. An island racing to be free of fossil fuels by 2020. An innovative nature reserve protecting endemic species and indigenous ways. These are three of the initiatives recognized by the 2015 World Legacy Awards, created by *National Geographic Traveler* in partnership with ITB Berlin—the world’s largest travel trade gathering—to applaud and support a tourism revolution in the making. Sustainable tourism principles are redefining how we explore our planet and the impact we’re having in the process. Among those helping to forge the way forward: the winners and finalists that we profile on the following pages. —*Costas Christ*

ONETIME OFFICERS'
RESIDENCES NOW HOUSE
GUESTS AT CALIFORNIA'S
CAVALLO POINT LODGE.

75
May
2015

WINNER | EARTH CHANGERS

Orange County Luxury Resorts, India

IN A COUNTRY with more than 1.2 billion people (nearly one fifth of the world's population), living in harmony with the natural world takes on a particular urgency—a challenge enthusiastically embraced by India's Orange County Luxury Resorts, a family-run enterprise based in the southwestern state of Karnataka. "We focus on delivering life-enriching experiences to our guests without sacrificing the planet," states the resorts' managing director, Jose Ramapuram, who also serves as an adviser on sustainability for the Karnataka state government.

At its two elegantly rustic villa properties, Coorg and Kabini, recycled and natural materials were used throughout construction, and only indigenous flora provides the landscaping. A reverse osmosis water-purifying system replaces plastic water bottles in all 80 villas and cottages, wind-power generators deliver energy, kitchen waste is transformed into biogas for cooking, and remaining waste is weighed, cataloged, and recycled to improve sustainability. The guest activities reflect a "spirit of the land" philosophy, from tiger-spotting excursions in Nargahole National Park to bird-watching on resort property, participating in traditional dances, volunteering for plantation chores, and exploring local waterways on boat safaris. www.orangecounty.in

MUST-SEES Iruppu Falls: Legend has it that the god Lakshmana shot an arrow into the lush hills, resulting in the thundering cascade of water that locals believe has the power to wash away sins. The Karaga Festival: This nine-day celebration, held March-April and one of India's oldest, honors the Hindu goddess Shakti with an elaborate procession of religious floats and hundreds of devotees in traditional dress.



POOLSIDE AT ORANGE
COUNTY RESORTS'
COORG PROPERTY



HUAORANI TRIBESMAN

WINNER |
ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

TROPIC JOURNEYS IN NATURE, ECUADOR

TRAVEL OUTFITTER Tropic Journeys in Nature wants to change how ecolodges operate by offering not just employment to local communities but ownership of the lodge itself. Its Huaorani Ecolodge, in Ecuador's Amazon region, is owned by the indigenous Huaorani people, who set their own salaries and plow profits back into community projects; Tropic Journeys is their partner in managing the lodge. This collaboration has led to the creation of a 135,908-acre nature reserve that is off-limits to oil companies (which have wanted to drill for underlying crude oil), allowing visitors to experience one of the most species-rich places on Earth, home to such unique rain forest animals as spectacled bears and pygmy marmosets.

"It takes years of patient dialogue to fully engage indigenous communities," says Jascivan Carvalho, Tropic Journeys' owner, "but the result is a deeper, more enriching experience for travelers—and for locals, whose livelihoods improve." Tropic Journeys' two decades in the Amazon inspired another community tourism project, on Floreana Island in the Galápagos. www.huaorani.com

MUST-SEES Wildlife: Colorful scarlet macaws share the nature reserve with tropical tree frogs, spider monkeys, tarantulas, and river-dwelling caimans.

ORANGE COUNTY RESORTS' (GAZEBO), ANDREW ROWAT/TROPIC JOURNEYS IN NATURE (MAN)



RENOVATED GUEST QUARTERS
AT CAVALLO POINT LODGE

WINNER | SENSE OF PLACE

Cavallo Point Lodge, United States

EMBRACING AUTHENTICITY can sometimes make for unexpected pairings. Take Fort Baker, a military base overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge that helped defend San Francisco for more than a century before its barracks were transferred to the National Park Service in 2002. When Mike Freed, a Marin County resident who had admired the woodwork characterizing the fort's colonial revivalist structures, learned that the Park Service was considering the development of a conference center on the site, he, along with some friends, offered to restore the decaying army barracks and adjoining ten-acre parade ground by turning it into a lodge—and in the process preserving a noteworthy California landmark.

Today, Cavallo Point invites travelers to stay in meticulously renovated LEED-certified buildings that have garnered top architectural honors from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. But the real winners in this successful collaboration between the lodge owners, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and the National Park Service are the residents and visitors who flock to Cavallo, where they enjoy homey comforts coupled with a “healing arts spa,” tea bar, and farm-to-fork dining. A perk: next-door views of the Golden Gate Bridge and easy access to miles of nearby biking and hiking trails. www.cavallopoint.com

MUST-SEES The lodge's grounds: Paths web the property, which is landscaped with some 58,000 indigenous plants grown from seed as part of Fort Baker's ecological restoration. Golden Gate Bridge: Walk across the span to take in views of San Francisco and the bay area. Golden Gate National Recreation Area: Hike and bike 80,000 acres of park land.

WINNER |
DESTINATION LEADERSHIP

ARUBA

IT IS PERHAPS POETIC that one of the world's smallest islands, situated next to one of the biggest oil nations, Venezuela, has committed itself to being the first nation free of fossil fuels, by 2020.

A Dutch outpost centered on tourism, Aruba punches above its weight. It has joined the Carbon War Room, founded in 2009 by international leaders such as Richard Branson to fight climate change; its solar park is one of the largest in the Caribbean, with 14,400 panels (soon to double); 20 percent of its electricity comes from wind; and a waste-to-energy plant turns island trash into renewable power. Aruba's smart-growth plans include electric-car stations and the first trolley system powered by batteries using hydrogen fuel cells, which are fed by sun and wind energy. That the island boasts miles of sand fringed by blue waters is a bonus. “We’re a living laboratory for a sustainable society,” says Prime Minister Mike Eman, who spearheaded many of the initiatives. The example is catching on. Six Caribbean nations have said they’ll follow the “Aruba Model.” www.aruba.com

MUST-SEE Arikok National Park: View ancient cave paintings by native Caquetio people and wander a cactus-filled landscape that is home to burrowing owls, whiptail lizards, and other endemic species.



WINDMILLS
ON ARUBA

ABOUT THE AWARDS

More than 150 entries were submitted from 56 countries on six continents. An international team of 18 judges, headed by Editor at Large Costas Christ, scored the entries according to globally recognized sustainable-tourism criteria. Also considered: innovation, guest activities, and quality of service. The 15 finalists underwent a rigorous on-site inspection. One winner was selected in each category. For more information, visit www.nationalgeographic.com/worldlegacyawards. Partners and sponsors include Ecuador Tourism, Adventure World, the TreadRight Foundation, and Nomadic Expeditions.



RAIN FOREST RETREAT:
THE NOTHOFAGUS LODGE

WINNER | CONSERVING THE NATURAL WORLD

Huilo Huilo Biological Reserve, Chile

TAKE 247,000 ACRES of temperate rain forest, sprinkle it with an array of eco-abodes, from tree houses to imaginative wood lodges—a “magic mountain,” a giant mushroom—weave in a foundation devoted to promoting local Mapuche culture, and add a big helping of scientific research. The result is Huilo Huilo, an innovative enterprise safeguarding one of the most valuable and threatened eco-regions on the planet. “The destruction of Patagonia’s natural heritage has been a steady and silent process accompanied by poverty and deforestation,” says Alexandra Petermann, Huilo’s executive director. “Sustainable tourism offers a more virtuous cycle, allowing us to establish lasting conservation.”

Among the beneficiaries: the critically endangered Patagonian huemul deer, Huilo’s mascot. Petermann is just as enthusiastic about activities on tap here, from kayaking green lakes and trekking glacier-topped Mocho-Choshuenco volcano to touring Huilo’s Museum of the Volcanoes, sampling beers crafted at its microbrewery, and paying a visit to the Huilo Huilo Foundation, where local women produce and sell organic honey, hand-embroidered placemats, and whimsical “spirits of the forest” cloth dolls. huilohuilo.com

MUST-SEES The Spirit Trail: Designed by indigenous Mapuche leaders, it’s “one of the best examples of a trail enhancing nature and embracing authenticity,” says Hitesh Mehta, author of *Authentic Ecolodges*. The Flight of the Condor: A series of five zip lines zigzag across a plunging river gorge known as the Abyss.

READ IT, DO IT

For additional lodge-based destinations, see National Geographic’s new collection of sustainable properties, Unique Lodges of the World: www.natgeolodges.com.

The Runners-Up

EARTH CHANGERS Leadership in environmentally friendly business practices and technology

■ **NIKOI ISLAND, INDONESIA** The resort exceeds standards for excellence in low energy use set by the International Tourism Partnership.

■ **THE BRANDO, FRENCH POLYNESIA** A luxury eco-resort with a marine research center and a focus on innovative green technologies.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES Promoting benefits that directly improve local livelihoods

■ **FEYNAN ECOLODGE, JORDAN** Rural Bedouin communities staff and supply the lodge.

■ **MUKUL RESORT, NICARAGUA** Educates and employs locals, supports area businesses, and helps provide clean drinking water.

SENSE OF PLACE Excellence in enhancing sense of place and authenticity; support for indigenous traditions

■ **FOGO ISLAND INN, CANADA** Celebrates island culture through partnerships with local and international artists and designers.

■ **GWAIL HAANAS NATIONAL PARK RESERVE, CANADA** A collaboration between Parks Canada and British Columbia’s Haida people to manage a national park reserve.

DESTINATION LEADERSHIP Places fostering exceptional cultural, environmental, and community best practices

■ **DELAWARE NORTH AT YOSEMITE, USA** The company’s Green Path plan implements, and trains staff in, environmental practices.

■ **VAL D’ARAN, SPAIN** A public/private partnership safeguards regional ways and indigenous species, such as the endangered hazel grouse.

CONSERVING THE NATURAL WORLD

Preserving nature, restoring habitats, protecting rare and endangered species

■ **ANDBEYOND, AFRICA AND ASIA** A mission to protect and restore wilderness has included rhinos and coral reefs.

■ **CONSERVATION ECOLOGY CENTRE, AUSTRALIA** Among the center’s projects: creating a wildlife corridor and planting trees for koalas.



THE BRANDO, POLYNESIA

JONATHAN IRISH/INGS (LODGE), THE BRANDO (ISLAND)

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39. Active South America
Offering outstanding, all-inclusive small group adventure vacations in Peru, Patagonia, Ecuador and Galapagos Islands.
40. Adventure Life
Offering private journeys and small group tours that go beyond the ordinary. Transform your travels into what they should be — inspiring, authentic.
41. Africa Adventure Company
The Africa Adventure Company is your passport for a safari trip to "Africa's Top Wildlife Countries." There is no better time to venture out than now!
42. African Safari Company 800-414-3090
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Tours of a Lifetime

Continued from page 65

MEXICO

Grave Doings

Oaxaca gets buzz for its Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebrations; less well-known are rituals in villages around Lake Pátzcuaro, in the state of Michoacán, where families hold all-night graveside vigils to honor loved ones, the centerpiece of this dive into colorful area culture. *Tia Stephanie Tours*: “Day of the Dead, Michoacán,” 8 days; \$2,085; www.tiastephanietours.com ●

OREGON, WASHINGTON, IDAHO, MONTANA

North by Northwest

Pedal from Portland, Oregon, to Missoula, Montana, on this 10-day cycling tour carved from the outfitter’s popular 45-day journey to Portland, Maine. Dramatic scenery en route includes the Columbia River Gorge and Bridal Veil Falls. *Trek Travel*: “Portland to Missoula,” 10 days; \$4,199; trektravel.com ●●

ILLINOIS, LOUISIANA

Making Tracks

Nostalgic for old-time train travel? Ensnare yourself

in vintage railcars and ride the *City of New Orleans* route from Chicago to the Big Easy. Passengers spend two nights in each city (in historic hotels). Entertainment includes live music; artists with Chicago’s Old Town School of Folk Music join some trips. *Pullman Rail Journeys*: “Chicago and New Orleans Roundtrip,” 7 days; from \$839 (includes meals on train); www.travelpullman.com ●●

FLORIDA

Putting Manatees First

Biologist Samantha Whitcraft studies the Crystal River, a critical habitat for a group of manatees that compose about a fourth of the U.S. population. Join her to canoe and snorkel with the marine mammals. Home is a 1,100-acre tree farm roamed by such rare species as gopher tortoises. *Oceanic Society*: “Manatees’ Ecosystem and Conservation,” 5 days; \$1,395; www.oceanicsociety.org ●●

CUBA

Kids Welcome

Cuba may not spring to mind when planning a family vacation, but this itinerary packs in activities designed to engage all ages, from acting with local theater students to searching

for alligators, hummingbirds, and hawks in Las Terrazas, a sustainable community in the Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve. *Classic Journeys*: “Cuba Family Vacation: Cultural Exchange,” 8 days; \$5,195 (includes airfare from Miami); www.classicjourneys.com ●

Central & South America

ARGENTINA

Click and Sip

Andean foothills studded with vineyards and colorful rock formations: Argentina’s northwest corner is a shutter-bug’s dream. Bone up on photo skills—lighting, framing—with local photographer Ossian Lindholm. Along the way, sample wines made with the area’s Torrontes grapes. *Ciclismo Classico*: “Argentina Vision and Vine,” 9 days; \$5,300; www.ciclismoclassico.com

PERU

High on the Andes

Stops at World Heritage sites Machu Picchu and Cusco pair with a pilgrimage to Quyllur Rit’i, a festival filled with music, trance dancing, and “spirits” in bear costumes. *Aspiring Adventures*: “Quyllur Rit’i Trip,” 14 days; \$3,675; www.aspiringadventures.com ●

BELIZE

Diving to Make a Difference

Plunge into Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve, a World Heritage site of exceptional biodiversity near Ambergris Caye, to monitor its population of invasive lionfish with a U.K.-based conservation group. Participants dive to collect data (advanced diving certification required), study lionfish by dissecting them, and learn all about reef ecology. *Blue Ventures Expeditions*: “Lionfish Dive,” 7 or 16 days; \$943, \$2,122; www.blueventures.org ●●

COSTA RICA

Teach While Touring

This teaching gig can span two weeks or 24. Lend a hand with lessons at a local school while brushing up on your español and living the *pura vida* near Manuel Antonio National Park, a preserve along Costa Rica’s Pacific coast. *Global Vision International*: “Volunteer With Children in Costa Rica,” 14 days; \$1,790; www.gviusa.com ●●

COLOMBIA

Town and Country

Experience the remarkable variety of this nation’s natural landscapes while mountain biking from the high Andes to the tropics, stopping in such cultural gems as the colonial town of Barichara and an organic coffee hacienda near Bucaramanga. *Colombia Adventure*: “Bogotá to Santander Biking Adventure,” 6 days; \$3,000; www.colombia-adventure.com

BRAZIL

Shore Thing

The overlooked northeast side of Brazil has it all, from the archipelago of Fernando de Noronha, a World Heritage site, to colonial architecture in the city of São Luís de Maranhão. Includes a two-day trek in lagoon-filled Lengóis Maranhenses National Park. *Adventure Life*: “Undiscovered Brazil,” 13 days; \$3,275; www.adventure-life.com ●

ECUADOR

Naturally Inclined

Single out birdcalls and spot monkeys and tropical frogs as local guides lead you in kayaks through Yasuni National Park, believed to be the most biodiverse place on Earth. *Tofino Expeditions*: “Amazon Kayaking Trip,” 9 days; \$4,390; www.tofino.com ●

Contributing editor **MARGARET LOFTUS** last reported on four lesser-known U.S. national parks in our April 2015 issue.

TOUR DECODER

The definition of “guided tour” has expanded as operators see more interest in private and self-guided tours.

SMALL-GROUP Guided trips for groups of strangers. **PROS**: Connecting with like-minded people. **CONS**: Enduring the occasional bore at mealtime. **TIP**: Pad your trip with extra days if you need alone time. Many operators offer trip extensions.

PRIVATE TOUR You travel with your own guide. **PROS**: Flexible

schedule. **You** pick your fellow travelers. **CONS**: Can be pricey. **TIP**: Tell the outfitter about any special interests you and your co-travelers have to help its staff customize your trip.

SELF-GUIDED Just you and an itinerary; transportation and digs prearranged. **PROS**: More autonomy. Less pricey. Help if you need it. **CONS**: All of the navigation will be left to you. **TIP**: More operators are offering self-guided versions of popular guided tours.

Johor, Malaysia

Continued from page 73

Johor as “Glutton Street” and eat my way from one fresh Chinese noodle joint to another.

I’m hoping these dishes will power me on a hike through Endau Rompin National Park, 300 square miles of hilly wilderness that straddles the state’s northern border. When your native habitat is the Upper West Side of Manhattan, you don’t enter a hundred-million-year-old rain forest lightly. Not without repellent, anyhow. But exploring Endau Rompin National Park turns out to be a casual, easygoing affair.

I arrive early enough to immediately board a longboat for a relaxed journey over the Endau River’s mini-rapids to the main trailhead of Kuala Jasin. With green hills and heavy underbrush, the scenery here is not so much postcard-perfect as prehistoric.

In the park, young men from the nearby Orang Asli (“original people”) aboriginal village of Kampung Peta serve as knowing, engaging guides. Mine says that, next time, “you come to my house for a true taste of jungle. Special leaves and herbs only we know to find and my mom knows to cook!” Later I’m not surprised when he picks up the scent, and thudding steps, of an elephant herd just out of sight.

I’m content to spot monkeys and boar. I learn to pick leeches from my ankles like a pro. I ford wide streams as I travel along the 16-mile barely worn circuit of trails, which leads to pristine waterfalls through rain forest that becomes cathedral-tall and all-encompassing. In just a day, this place restores my spirit to its pre-anything state.

From the palace to the rain forest, sometimes life, the biggest kembara of them all, takes you to unexpected places—places such as multicultural Johor, unpackaged and unapologetic, a crossroads grab bag where anyone can end up feeling at home.

JOHN KRICH’s most recent travel book is a collection of food writing, *A Fork in Asia’s Road*. He is based in Kuala Lumpur. **JUSTIN GUARIGLIA** is celebrating his 15th year as a contributing photographer at *Traveler*.



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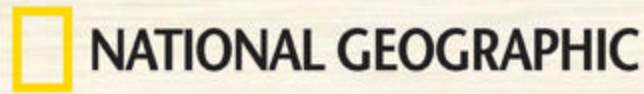


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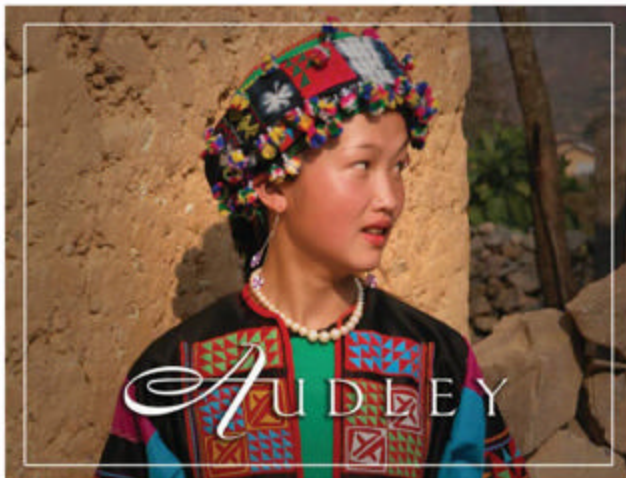


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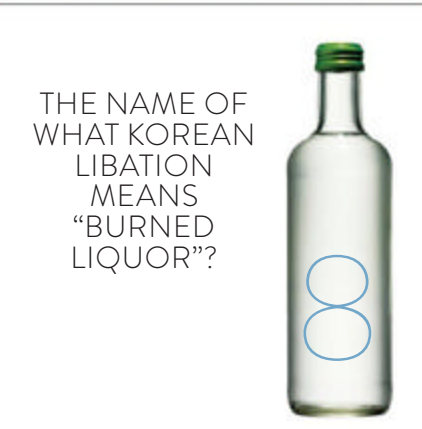
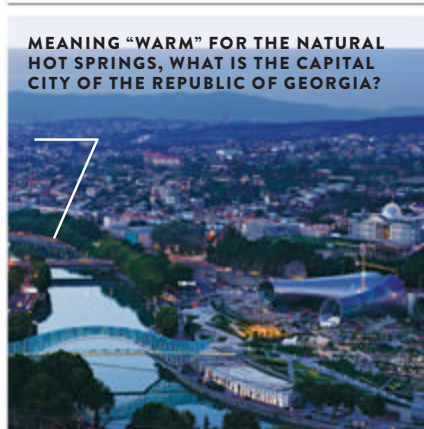
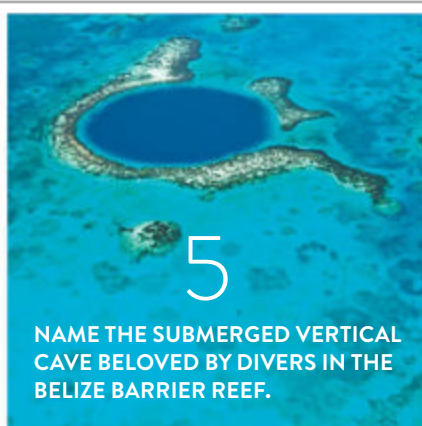
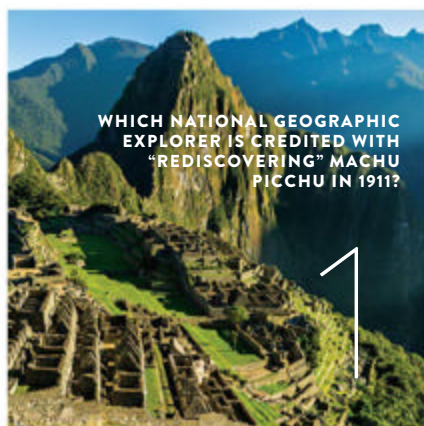
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